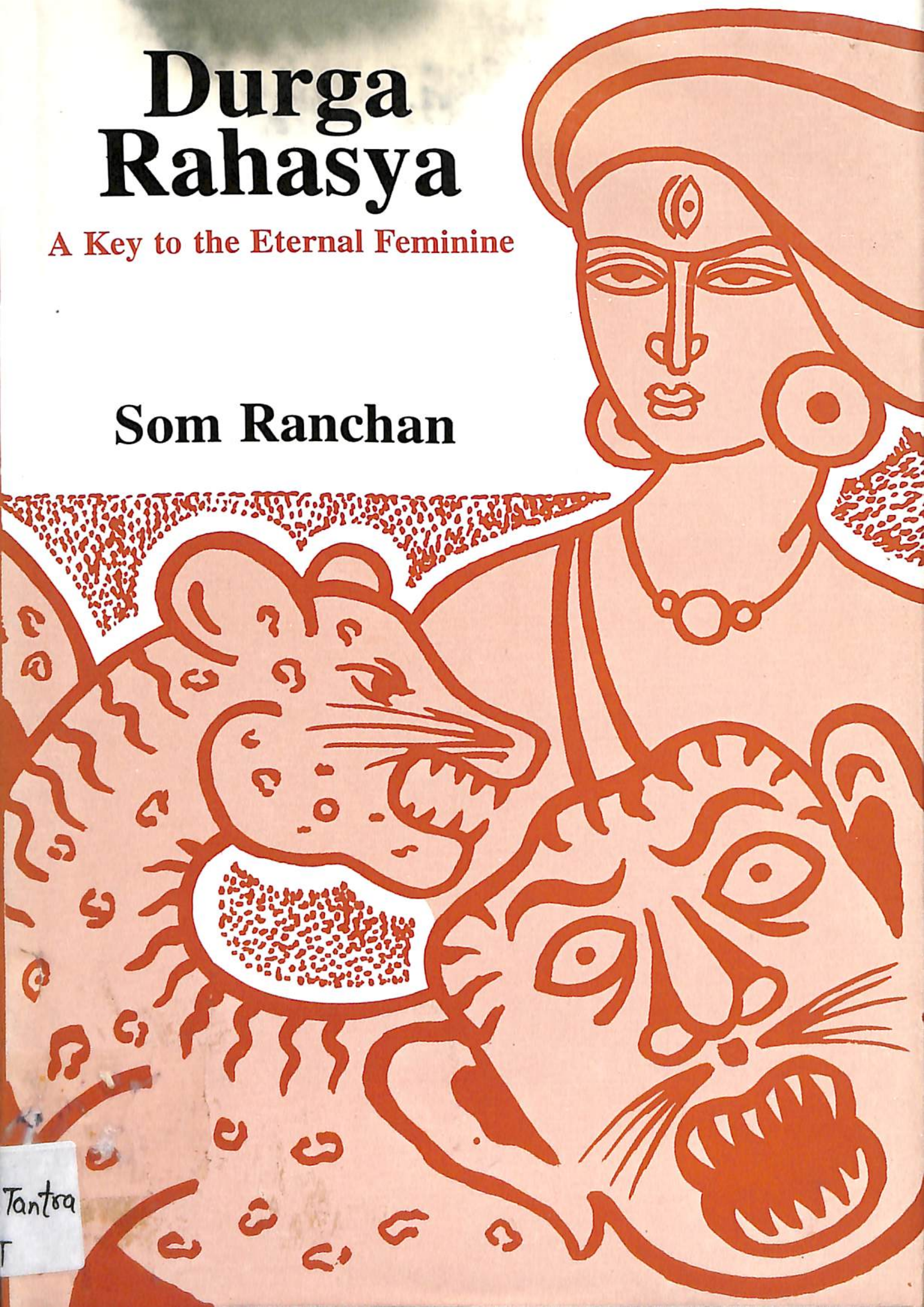
Durga Rahasya

A Key to the Eternal Feminine

Som Ranchan



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Durga Rahasya

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An initiate of the late Swami Venkatesananda, *Durga Rahasya* builds on the insights vouchsafed by him. It brings out the cosmological, anthropological and existential meaning of the text via the three tales. The Introduction unravels the stories syntactically together with the lauds in a relaxed semiotic rhythm, supplementing with a commentary cultural and trans-cultural in five brief chapters enabling insights on the Eternal Feminine to the contemporary reader. The transcreation in a class by itself done by a poet steeped in Durga symbology as a *sahridaya* reader rounds off the *Durga Rahasya*. The book should interest any intelligent reader in addition to indologists and psychologists and the initiates. It is a handmade book, free from needless jargon. It stands apart from any other book on the subject by virtue of its freshness and interdisciplinary rangings.

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Som Ranchan born in 1932 in Lahore, had education (M.A., Ph.D.) in India and USA was Professor of English in USA and India with a brief stint as editor. Authored over fifty books: twenty-two of poetry, others in religion, psychology, myth, folklore, etc. An authority on Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda. Former Fulbrighter, Hazen Fellow, HRD, Himachal Academy's Fellow, recently was an IIAS Fellow.

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Som Ranchan

Munshiram Manoharlal
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Om Ganeshaya Namah

Dedicated to
the late Swami Venkatesananda
the sannyasi, non-pareil with whom
I'd clarifying discussion in Hollywood
in the early seventies
and to
Dev Swarup
with whom I'd transference interchanges
on the Numinosum Tremendum
both
stood in the psychic to bridge
the mundane and the spiritual

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Preface

DURGA RAHASYA offers to the reader an interpretation of Durga via the intricate symbolism of the three stories interspersed with lauds and the two characters Suratha and Samadhi involved in the Durga process, recipient of it through sage Medhas. The interpretation given in the Introduction and five brief chapters is followed by an innovative transcreation of the Durga text.

Durga Rahasya is a book with a difference. To the best of my knowledge such an interpretation is not available in a sustained way. For this interpretation I am essentially indebted to the late Swami Venkatesananda who at one time belonged to divine life order of Swami Shivananda, but later branched out independently without breaking his connectivity with the order and with his guru as such. Swami Venkateshananda initiated me into the Durga process and gave me insights into it several times in the course of his peregrinations in USA where I used to meet him.

For transcreation I am somewhat indebted at one point to Professor Rama Kant of Punjab University who was Kalidasa Professor of Sanskrit.

Grateful acknowledgements are also due to Professor K.N. Awasthi who first typed the transcreation, to Goraksha Paul who prepared the final manuscript under the supervision of Shri P. Sharma, retired Principal of Government College, Dharamsala. The interpretation portion was typed by Shri

Ravindra in the Ministry of Official Languages, Delhi. Acknowledgements are due to many others, and abroad, too many to invoke with whom I had an opportunity to discuss. Inputs made by them wherever relevant have been incorporated in the interpretation and the transcreation.

Finally I am beholden to Sonia Sharma for sorting out the Index items and readying it for print.

SOM RANCHAN

New Delhi
31 July 2001

Introduction

THIS Introduction will give an overview of *Durga Saptashati* or *Devi Mahatmya,* but in a summarised syntactic or syntagmatic terms. It gives basic ensembles and their meaning by way of a beginning initiation and entry into the text.

The first story is told by sage Medhas to two losers, one has lost a kingdom through no fault, another has lost his business and family. Though in the hermitage where supposedly they will turn to *nivritti* and detachment, both of them are experiencing excruciating pangs of attachment. They approach the sage for him to resolve their unbearable predicament. Instead of dealing with them the rapeutically, the sage introduces them to mytho-cosmological ontological reality called Mahamaya who ties the noose of attachment around our necks for the world to sustain and go on.

To their bamboozled query regarding Mahamaya's identity, her nature, her active essence, how she came into being, the sage replies that she is Eternal, Unborn, but she bodies forth to accomplish the tasks of the gods. After this cryptic philosophical statement, he launches headlong into a cosmological story which has become an integral part of Hindu discourse. Every Hindu knows the story, if not fully, quite a bit of it, as it has passed into his lore and everyday life.

Since the story proper is explicated in chap. 1, here in this overview certain points shall be specially noted in the cultural discourse. When the child Brahma enthroned on the lotus rising from Vishnu's navel realises the menace of the advancing demons, Madhu and Kaitabha, he immediately goes into laud of Yoganidra who has enspelled Vishnu in deep ouroboric sleep. Hailing her Sovereign Mistress of the universe, embodier, nourisher, succourer and also destroyer, the laud becomes culture-specific in its metonymy. She is Svaha, Svadha, Vashatkar, Nada, life-force enhancer drink, the letters (*a, u, m*) in *Om*—the laud goes on from verses 70 to 77, the laud is a cultural parole, the great mother is invoked in terms of her sovereign functions, the invocation catalogues other goddesses such as Sandhya, Savitri, as none but her, she is the great night, the night of time, the night of infatuation. So on and so forth. The laud concludes with a specific demand that Yoganidra should release Vishnu from her shackles and when she leaves and appears before Brahma in transfiguration, she is requested to infatuate the demons, Madhu and Kaitabha, with pride. Furthermore, she should awaken and rouse intelligence in Vishnu to kill them. And this is what precisely happens—the death of the demons, victory of Vishnu. The parole is rich and dense with theocrasy. Only the initiates can fully relate to it, to the collocation of piled metonymies, though the laity relates pragmatically to the evocation of a power, both awesome and beauteous, the outsiders can relate to it by dismantaling the text and transposing the Magna Mater's reality into their cultural discourse in their own way.

What is worth underscoring commonsensically is that in a no-win situation rationally, one should turn to the cosmological for help, not for resignation and reconciliation to one's lot, but for existential mediation. Normally one throws in the towel suicidally. In life the existential and the cosmological stay, if not separate altogether, subjunctive. But in this mythologem the two are welded and cohered. As the Durga story progresses, we come to know that not only does Suratha recover his kingdom, but is deified as Suvarini, as an eidolon, as a model to look upto, as a frame of reference to draw inspiration from.

Though in an all too brief interpretation in chap. 1, the first tale has been dealt with as a whole, highlighting the symbolism, its study in terms of syntactic units is called for which is being done in these pages.

I (a) The first unit is Suratha's defeat at the hands of his enemy, seemingly less powerful with a lesser host....
 (b) Suratha's shrinkage and reduction to his capital only.
 (c) Conspiracy by his ministers and friends who appropriate the treasury and his army forcing him to flee.
 (d) His coming to Medha's hermitage and running into Samadhi, another loser.
 (e) Their coming together because of a shared predicament. In fact, one can say safely that their shared predicament has resulted from their overgoodness. King Suratha was too caring, an indulgently caring king. Samadhi is too much in the family. In the story's language, they could be compared to those who see in the day, not in the night, though a wise man sees both during day and night.

II (a) The second syntactic unit comprises their disclosure to sage Medhas their predicament stemming from nostalgic attachment....
 (b) The sage's mini discourse on attachment as bewildering even the sages....
 (c) Sages's introducing them mythopoeically to attachment as the sustaining principle, as an ontic category....
 (d) Then telling them through the story, how they can go beyond it through prayer, righteous action in the wake of vigilance.

The purpose in unfolding the first tale syntactically is to enable the reader to enter into it purposefully. He should not intimidate himself with the fact that the characters are Vishnu, Brahma and the puissant demons Madhu and Kaitabha. He has to interact via the tale with the components of his own personality as shown in the narrative of his life. The reader is dispersed in all the characters. Insofaras he is helpless, he is like Suratha and Samadhi. But he has to awaken All-Consciousness (Vishnu) through his Creative Intellect (Brahma). As an embodiment of creative intellect, he has to use a multi-pronged approach through prayer, frenzied lauding, and also be specific in his beseeching to the magma (the Magna Mater in this case). In tantra there is no room for half-hearted prayers followed by vague, faint demands. Tantra does not accept the disjunction between the existential, the cosmic, and the transcendent, the micro, macro and the ineffable Beyond. In the tale even the adversity is celebratory because it makes a painful cut in the complacent consciousness through which to go out and contact both the overhead and supraconsciousness to heal and reinvigorate oneself for embarking on a greater endeavour and an epic journey as emblematised in the icon characters, Suratha and Samadhi.

Since Medhas has the ears of Suratha and Samadhi and enraptured their hearts and kindled their curiosity, he embarks upon the second tale of the epic exploits of Durga. If the first tale was cosmological unravelled for the existential viewing of Suratha and Samadhi, the second tale of Chandi vs. Mahishasura is anthropological-cosmologieal. Anthropological in the sense that the world has come into being, there are distinct gods such as Sun, Moon, Vayu, Varuna, Agni, Kubera, Earth, Yama with their principalities, domains, powers and functions with Indra as their king. It is obvious that these worthies had been bodied forth to run the universe, world, our society according to *dharma* and *rita*. But the worthies lose the control of the system to a powerful demon, Mahisha who has turned them into refugees. In due course with Brahma they come to Vishnu whom Shiva was visiting at the time to dilate on their ignominy and the iniquities of Mahisha. Thus ends Unit I of the syntagma.

Unit II is descriptive—the Big Three becoming angry and the defeated crew joining in their anger. The fires released from their anger becomes a conflagration which becomes a massy mountain which becomes the Prime Woman, because she has originated from the fierce Raudra energy of all the gods, Principal and Secondary, She is called Chandi.

Unit III develops the personality of Chandi as the gods, and the gods emanate their lights for these to enter different portions of her physiognomy. This spectacle is not to be enjoyed only as sheer poetry in the hyperbolical mode. The power which has come from the gods has to be appropriately invested with ultrafine differentiations. She has to be succinctly and exquisitely modulated. She is not a loose ensemble. She is homologised.

III (b) Weaponises and emblematises her with a formal ceremony by the same gods.

(c) Empowered, she utters a sound which cannot be contained by the sky, in fact, the sky shrivels because of the volume and intensity.

IV This syntactic unit unfolds epically, as it were, the battle between Chandi and her hosts which spring from her fierce exhalations and Mahishasura's cohorts. In the interpretation chapter Breadth Principle, I have dealt with the symbolism of the major demons of Mahishasura and Chandi's despatching them to gory death. It is important to note that demons are not cardboard characters. They fight to the finish even in the throes of their dismemberment. The idea is that when you embark upon the alchemy of transformation and want to empower or reempower your divine parts, the demoniac parts do not pack off because one has shouted one's intention to battle against them.

Unit V begins with chap. 3 in which Mahishasura himself comes out, and what a fight he gives, changing his disguises from buffalo through lion to elephant, through man, back to being a buffalo....

Unit VI fleshed out in canto VI of the text expresses the joy of the gods, *gandharvas, apsaras* at being rid of the incubus and his cohorts, and his principal generals such as Chikshura, Chamar, Asiloma, Bidal, Bhaskal, Parivarita and true to their characters, gods and others burst out into lauds. But what is important is that they raise certain questions. One question is how come, demons in general, Mahishasura in particular did not become incinerated at the mere sight of her awesome power. The answer given is twofold. They had to fight in order to change and transform. Secondly, they could fight on for a considerable while because her all surpassing beauty gave them precious hours to live, the gods find as answer, a clue to their own questionings and also get an epiphanic insight into the character of Chandi who is all compassion in her heart, but implacable in battle. Pleased with the rapturous lauds and the increase in their understanding and insight Chandi asks them munificently to ask from her whatever they wish. They do not ask for any thing. They have become devotees with insight withal. They have already realized that She is All-in All, that She blesses the homes of the virtuous with prosperity and auspiciousness even as she blasts the homes of the wicked with poverty and penury. She blesses the hearts of the high-minded aspirers with devotion. Seeing their devotion and purity, Chandi pledges that she will always come to their aid whenever the need arises, the encounter of the gods and others with Chandi is truly dialogical in the rapturous, neotic sense, and not in the thesis-antithesis-synthesis paradigm. One is dealing with Martin Buber's I-You dialogue.

The syntactic scissoring of the last tale may be done in the following units:

Unit I presents the coming to power of Shumbha and Nishumbha and their appropriating the powers of the gods together with their regalia, weapons and emblems….

Unit II presents the lauding of the gods to the Sovereign

Power on the banks of the Ganga. In this the goddess comes from Parbati's emanation. Prabati had just emerged from her sacred bath. It is imperative to understand that first time the great Mother was just a transcendental flash from the Ouroboric sleep (Yogindra) of Vishnu in response to Brahma's beseechings. In her second manifestation she was a Conjoint Power of all the gods. But now she comes directly from the Eternal Feminine, Parbati. The access is now direct.

Unit III is the sighting of the goddess on a knoll in the Himalayas by Chanda and Munda who report in post haste to their masters the wonder they have seen and their telling the latter that they should appropriate her like they have appropriated the regalia and insignia of the gods. It is interesting to note the glitter psychology at work and commodity orientation to beauty and woman.

Unit IV is Devi's encounter with Sugriva. Encounter is exquisitely rendered. Having been bidden to please the goddess and cajole her into coming, Sugriva true to his diplomatic mission praises his masters sky-high with she brushing off his proxy heavy-handed wooing lightly, archly, suggesting that they should come in person and vanquish her in a battle because she had resolved in her light green years that way. The sweet tongued Sugriva loses his cool and becomes angry with her. Keeping her mischievous composure telling him in an implied behavioural way not to exceed his brief with unbecoming words, she bids him to carry her brief as befits a two penny pimp messenger.

Unit V brings Dhumralochan, a dotty oldie on the scene with his army to kidnap a woman. It is ludicrous, the entire force perishes from the roarings and ravagings of the lion while Dhumralochan perishes from the hum sound of the Devi. It is no encounter really. No battle at all takes place, so much bravado ending in easy farce.

The news of this total debacle rouses the anger of Shumbha so irrationally that he orders Chanda and Munda to bring her dead or alive.

It should be noted by a discerning reader that a full canto VI of twenty-four verses is devoted to this farcical encounter.

Unit VI deals with the encounter of Durga, Kali, and the Lion, and her hosts emanating from her exhalations with Chanda and Munda and their cohorts. The battle is finely depicted in chap. 7. In this battle Kali who has emanated from the angry brow of Durga is the principal character, and her performance is superb, what with her ghastly appearance, her berserk killing of demons, drinking their blood, gobbling them cannibalistically alongwith their weapons. After the battle when this Kali presents the bleeding severed heads of Chanda and Munda to Durga, the latter baptises or christens her with a new name—Chamunda. Perhaps it is important to note that though Chanda and Munda are introduced as two separate characters, they should be seen as a composite complexum. Please note that *Durga Saptashati* has thirteen cantos. In terms of diachrony the seventh canto is the divide. Should be seen that way. Chanda and Munda are demons of lust and anger. Once they are done away with, half the battle against Shumbha is over. Looked at from the Devi-*sadhana* angle as pointed out in the interpretation, chap. 3 of *Durga Rahasya,* one has entered the inner courtyard of transformation. To use fortress imagery, the outer ramparts together with the barricade walls have crumbled. The fighting now will take place in the inner territories of the fortress. That is why the Navaran Mantra culminates in Chamundayi Vicche. With the erasing of the grossness of Chanda and Munda, Kundalini, the divine power, no longer stays in stasis, it becomes kinetic. And if after its awakening, the *sadhaka* continues to be in anger and lust, Kundalini experience will be one of pain and pressure. If such a double-bind comes to pass which is not that infrequent, it is important for the *sadhaka* to invoke Matangi, the Moharatri goddess. The *sadhaka* may read *Shakta Pramod,* the relevant chapter on her in it and fine tune his consciousness and energy and refine his disposition vis-à-vis women who represent the eternal feminine. All women represent her. It should be remembered that the Goddess in this tale has come directly from Parbati, there is no eruption as in the first tale, no joining of hands as in the second tale on the part of the gods. To speak psychologically, the feminine does not come herein from the male side, but directly from the feminine and that two from the waters. Water represents feeling while fire represents intuition, air thinking, earth sensation.

Unit VII of the third tale centres Raktabija in action. It appears that the Goddess had anticipated it because she had called upon the gods, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and the other gods, Indra, Kartikeya, Narasingha, Varaha to emanate fighting female forms which they did. They looked exactly like them together with their mounts/vehicles and adorned with their weapons and emblems. In Chandi-Mahishasura tale the male gods had emanated her from their joint/co-joint anger, and then invested her with their qualities. The operation was tripartite. Here the male gods emanate complete goddess in one go and they take up battle positions right away. In addition to these amazons there is Chamundi-Kali carried over into action, even though she had told Durga after Chanda and Munda death that the latter should do the rest. I guess she knew that her need of Kali would be a dire necessity. In the ensuing battle every drop of Raktabija becomes another Raktabija. Without Kali and her thousands of jackals who could have devoured the Raktabija's clones, each clone producing a legion in turn, things would have been problematic. Faced with this horrendous situation, Durga goes into a quick consultation with Kali, advising the latter to drink every blood drop of Raktabija before it hits or falls on the ground. Raktabija is wounded by all goddeses, each drop is licked in air till

Raktabija is drained of all blood and hits the ground, a hollow, bloodless, dehydrated corpse. In the interpretation Raktabija is shown as representing Ego. The battle against ego is long, hard and arduous.

Unit VIII opens with Shumbha's ordering total mobilisation with him and his brother leading the offensive. The battle is fierce and sustained. They use every conceivable weapon. So does the Mother. The ding-dong is chronicled. Nishumbha is the first to be floored. Mistaking his brother dead with whom he was open to sharing the goddess in the original proposal that he had mooted through his messenger Sugriva, Shumbha's anger knows no bounds. He engages the Mother with redoubled fury. While this is going on, Nishumbha wakes up from his swoon, attacks devi's lion and Kali. Surprisingly, he scores palpable hits, when Devi notices it, she makes short of Nishumbha for good. In the interpretation in chap. 3, I have tried to show how Nishumbha represents intellect, radiant intellect, but cold, as he is cut off from the feminine feeling complex. He is cold working on the senses, mind-ego complex. That's why his shield depicts eight moons representing five senses, mind, the sixth ego, the seventh. Throw in intellect, you have eight moons.

Unit IX of the tale pits Durga against Shumbha. It is one to one encounter. As Shumbha is left alone with the decimation of his entire army and with the death of the brother, he taunts her telling her that she is fighting, fortified with his women. Devi withdraws all the goddesses into herself showing the deluded demon that the latter inhere in her. In the battle to begin with weapons are used. As he loses them all, one after the other, she fights him physically with hands, with slaps and fists. He has a trick up his sleeve. He flies off the Mother in Mid Air, but she has no problem in battling him in mid-air. Of course, the gods as witnesses are surprised. But she hits him and hurls him down on the earth. For a split second he passes out, getting up sooner than soonish, advances towards her, but she pierces him with the trident in the chest. And that is it. In the interpretation of this tale in chap. 3, I have tried to show that Shumbha represents the yogic void which has to be pierced for the feeling function to effloresce in the heart. Hathayogis and Rajayogis and practitioners of voids in due course offset earth consciousness, detaching themselves from reality, escaping from its practical and relational demands through trance cultivation. That's why it is important that he is killed on terra firma. In flying off with her to mid-air, he was, Shumbha was resorting to trance tactics. In this context it is interesting to recall that Madhu and Kaitabha wanted to be killed where there was no water. But their ruse did not work, Vishnu had enlarged his thighs and killed them too on terra firma. Perhaps, it should be pointed out that demon does not usually feel comfortable with the earth elements.

With the death of Shumbha, the earth is secured, ill omens disappear, rivers run their normal course.

In the laud that follows in canto XI certain asseverations have to be highlighted, namely, those who take refuge in Her become capable of extending protection to others. Devi *bhaktas* become extendors. Secondly, she is the Saviour Grace who protects against snakes, dacoits, forest fires. Pleased with the laud she unfolds a cavalcade of her forms, Nanda, Raktadantika, Shatakshaki with the hundred eyes which will remove the hundred year famine affecting the earth by becoming Shakambhari, lady of plants. In this incarnation she will kill an invincible demon too. So she will also bear the appellation of Durgadevi. Later as devourer of demons to protect the sages I'll be known, she says as Bhimadevi. Then when another demon of the name of Aruna will create a ruckus, unleash pandemonium in the three worlds, I will appear in the form of countless, six-legged bumble bees and sting the demons to death. My name then will be Bhramari.

The master idea behind the forms is the fecundity of the Devi to emanate a multitude of forms to protect and nourish and safeguard the evolved and not hesitate to kill and eliminate the berserk, malformed demoniacs.

At this juncture it should be pointed out that the Devi is for active intervention. She is not for Kaivalya, Neoplatonic flight of the Alone to the Alone. She is not for tripping and trancing out from the world process.

In the last canto XIII both Suratha and Samadhi embark on a sustained, arduous *sadhana* for three years. As a result they have veridical visions of the great Magna Mater. She asks them what they would like to have. Suratha asks for the boon of an imperishable kingdom in the next life. She gives that in any case but also reconquest of his lost kingdom. This is kind of interesting, worth pondering. Devi does not give a post-dated cheque. Samadhi on his part wants knowledge which will culminate in *moksha* which he gets. That does make sense because familial disillusionment is far more traumatic than loss in the collective.

In the preceding pages I have given an overall introduction to the scripture, overarching, yet I have been essentially syntactic and syntagmatic, to speak the terminology of semiotics. Now it is essential to abstract the paradigmatic motifs which are:

One the Great Mother/Eternal Feminine is the Primordial Reality
The parole on her in the scripture is cultural but also universal....

Second, She is best grasped through stories. Stories are compressed and extended, mythopoeically condensed (First Tale) and elaborate (the Third Tale). The stories are in the heroic, epic mode which celebrates general carnage of demons, specific decimation of the bad, and dramatic kill of the ugly which make for a visceral reading response, a gut response from adrenalin activation.

In the structuration of the stories, extended lauds are skilfully spaced and abundantly which give relief from the gore of the battles and tether the heroic orientation in its bedrock and matrix (to mix metaphors) of devotion. Devotion is not quietistic, but dithyrambic and kinetic because the target is not peace, tranquillity, serenity predicated on escape and withdrawal, but psyching oneself to surrender and action. The reader should interact with the stories and lauds actively and dynamically and not speculatively, he should collaborate. For example, the First Story should be applied to oneself. One should think of one's creative potentials, entelechies in specific, not in a vague, helter-skelter way from one's maternal, umbilical depths and see the obstacles in the way of their potentiation and devise not just analytic ways but logo-spiritual ways to pulverise them into smithereens, and eliminate them. And creativity is not to be just equated with writing, acting, painting, sculpting, It is that too, for sure. But it is living as an emanate of the Devi. Brahma, of course, created Navadurgas: Shailaputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalaratri, Mahagauri, and Siddhidhatri. The nine goddesses should be understood in a tripartite paradigm. The first three are celestial, the middle three are into fertility, fecundity, invincible maternality and *coniunctio* companionship (Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani). The parole is cultural for sure, but once the symbolism is explained as it has been in the second chapter of the main interpretation, there is no problem in understanding it. It is time it is realised that cosmological archetypology is always iconised culturally. Ontology unless it becomes anthropology is for the birds, nitwits, lunatics. What is extraordinary about Indian culture is that no rupture has taken place between theology and society here from BC to the end of the twentieth century. The last three standing respectively for experience, becoming, suffering, Nekiya, Dark Night, radiance and all achieving accomplishing power (Mahagauri, Siddhidhatri) emblematise fulfilment, *bhukti*-realization. It should be understood that experience with the concomitant of suffering is an integral part of gnostic, experiential knowledge and self-realization.

In the language of Swami Vivekananda, the brickbats and the bouquets, both have to be welcomed, not in a superficial, cavalier way, they have to be assimilated.

In Indian culture, Navadurgas are iconized ritually in nine young girls, usually, they are from the neighbourhood for the most part. Elders touch their feet with sprinkling of water, put all equalising blades of grass on their head with two young boys, one representing Ganesha, the other Bhairava, both offspring of the great Mother, the former domesticated householder, the second dionysian and a warrior par excellence. In a word, Devi is ritualised, Ritual is heuristic enactment. It is precise, yet hermeneutic.

Navadurgas are iconized in calendars adorning even the barbers' shops in obscure villages, and the wonder of wonder is that not only the barbers, but customers, the country yokels, understand them not in cognitive Western sense, but in a direct, visceral, emotional way. For example, Kalaratri is portrayed as a woman with round, dilated, afraid eyes on a wild ass. I asked a villager getting his shave in the adjacent chair what it meant to him. He answered, "Sure Sir, I know her too well. I lost my crop because of bad weather, my wife has been bedridden for six months, my eldest son is a problem, though grown up, an agentic adult who's not pulling his burden...but this too shall pass. I worship Mahagauri. I'll not only endure and prevail, but enlarge myself and he will be part of my empowerment. If not in this life, in my indirect life-time."

I was stunned to hear. Felt snubbed and humbled at becoming a bloody interlocutor.

What I am trying to convey is that the scripture *Durga Saptashati* is diffused in the lives of the people here, their relationship is visceral, from the gut. It is in their "blood consciousness", I speak in a concept from D.H. Lawrence, the elitist in the upper crust need that impregnation or insemination. Hence this book *Durga Rahasya*!

Thirdly, to return to the motifs after a discursive, digressive excursus, the great Goddess is for *bhukti* and *mukti. Bhukti* is not personalistic, egocentric consumerism, but for enjoyment in a shared, spacious, abundant space, in the dynamics of expansion. *Mukti,* therefore, is not dissolution beyond time and space, into inane pale transcendence. *Mukti* from the *shakti* perspective is dissolution into the world. You are detached because you have expanded. *Mukti* is a pan entry into multitudinous existence. In *Devi Mahatmyam* Vedanta is turned on its head. The method is tantric, target is tantric, The reference is Vedantic. Devi is All-Consciousness, but the world, existentiality, body is not illusory, all veins are pervaded, permeated by her. Even the demons she kills are not outside her pleorama, nimbus. They are killed because in their ignorance and perversity they cut themselves off which is not permissible. There is no limbo for them. Instead there is heaven. There they will sort out themselves and on their return to earth plane, whenever, they will become her minions, her myrmidons. It is interesting to note that in Durga-worship Mahishasura is included as worthy of worship. He is a titan redeemed. Now an integral part of Chandi Mandala. He is now half-buffalo, half-man. While killing him Chandi did not allow the full emergence of man from the buffalo body. So now he is a *coniunctio* of man and buffalo. He will have the wild stampeding strength of the buffalo and the intelligence of man, sanctified withal.

Devi is not for refining the animal out of existence. Note, for example, that Devi's Lion is throughout active, supremely so, in battle after battle, he enjoys roaming in the battlefield, tossing his golden mane, exhaling the life-breaths of hundreds of demons through his snappy, staccato roars (hums). He is the only who shares the tantric *bija* with Kali who has jackal theriomorphs. They join Kali in dining over demon flesh. While we are dilating on this point, the theriomorphic side of an archetype, that when the latter is dynamised, it is invariably accompanied by the animal associated with it. Shiva without his bull is only a meditator. Ganesha with his mouse is unthinking. With whom will have his extemporaneous raps, his extended dialouges. Incidentally, mouse represents the mind of Ganesha. In any case Devi without her Lion will be more like Uma practising fierce meditations, Parbati's home is full of animals, it is a mini zoo, what with the bull of Shiva, her Lion, Shiva's snakes, Skanda's peacock and rooster, Ganesha's mouse. Point which is being made is that without the accompanying theiromorph, a god, goddess loses his/her kinesis and with others. If the reader be interested in the theriomorphic which is the biological instinctual side of the archetype, he is welcome to read Carl Jung on the subject.

In the light of the observations made in the preceding few pages, perhaps it is best to encapsulate the Devi gnostically. Gnosticism postulates a three-layered consciousness or personality theory. There is *soma* pertaining to the body, senses, instincts, reflexes, instinctlaved or related emotions such as self-preservation, safety, aggression, vitality which is physical. There is psyche, not ego, which relates us to other fluxes, emotional and volitional, and there is 'pneuma', the spiritual side. Gnosticism subscribes to their gestalt, taking care of the splits sharding the trio. The splitting gives rise to malaise. The somatic side of the Devi is in the animal galore of the auxiliary goddesses, the psychic side is embodied in their relationship with one another, with the lesser gods, *gandharvas,* and *apsaras,* from the psychic side, they are synergising one another. The spiritual side is in the ontology attributed to her through lauds.

Now gnostics will not say that psyche is above the *soma,* and pneuma above both, they are not into hegemonising.

Another motif central though implied is in the communitas which binds the Devi family, for sure, Chandi is in command in the Mahishasura tale, so is Durga in the Shumbha tale, though there is much more consultancy and equalitarianism operating there. So Devi has no problem in emanating a major protagonist such as Kali. And she has no problem in taking into herself the plurality of the other goddesses into herself. Even the *bhakta* becomes one with her, so communitarianism moves into the mystical locale of identity wherein self is in the other and the other is in the self. It is not self not meeting the other as in Lacan's world where at best the self and the other can strike dialogical postures or relationships.

In contrast, the demons are not community and relationship. They are into command and subservience; they are into things, commodity cathexes, into property. What is at work there is Hegelian master-slave dialectic. With the Devi, however, even the demons who change, evolve are legitimated as part of her ingroup. Nishumbha who goes beyond the alienating sociopathy of the overelevated intellect and Shumbha who pierces the void and quits being spiritual icarus become part and parcel of her *parivara,* family.

Keeping this introductory initiation the reader should unhesitatingly interact with the text of the scripture because it is not a hegemonic text like other scriptures of East or West. In the translation therefore I have freely transcreated with license because I felt, being a poet, that literal translation just won't work. At places I compressed, especially in dealing with lauds which were too replete with religious cultural metonymies and mythic metaphors, at other places I amplified. After the death of Raktabija my transcreation has incorporated Kundalini symbolism and imparted to the battle an inward thrust. In the transcreation of the first tale I have made the secure Brahma envision in the Navadurgas and rounded off the tale. All the translations that I have read are literal. They are competent. For transcreation one needs the ictus of active imagination within parameters and mantric word wizardry. One has to be free to decompose the text to recompose it effectively. In the transcreation I have given the meanings of the demons, underscoring their symbology. In the second laud I have brought in Greek goddesses on the same axis to give a transcultural flavour. Despite my modest satisfaction with the transcreation, even exhilaration at certain places, I am acutely aware of the problematics nearly insurmountable, involved in transposition from one expression system to another, from one universe of signification to another.

Durga Saptashati or *Devi Mahatmya* is a bios-energetic text, not a philosophico-yogic text like *Gita*. So what was called for was transcreation, not translation.

Now that the basic introduction is over, let us move to the second part comprising five short chapters. The second part wrestles with the text more intellectually, showing the role of the lauds functionally, unravelling the symbology of the demonology in "Walpurgisnacht", in addition to cutting into the three tales paradigmatically to supplement the syntactic presentation primarily in this introduction. Between the semiotics of the introduction and the loose semiology in the interpretation, the reader is free to mediate in his own way.

CHAPTER 1

Creative Principle

DURGA is the Mother Goddess of the Hindus. She is worshipped throughout the length and breadth of India in temples which are everywhere from remote hamlets to bustling cities, and in all Hindu households. Because she is embedded in our religion and culture, it is important to have a basic understanding of Durga. This basic understanding is spelled out in a scripture called *Devi Mahatmya,* in the form, principally, of three stories told by a sage called Medhas to two characters, one a defeated king, Suratha, and an erstwhile merchant, Samadhi, who has been forced by his family to leave. The stories are interspersed with lauds to Durga. Lauds are praises sung up or chanted by the gods to her. They invoked her powers and qualities for the devotees to imbibe and absorb.

Let us begin with the characters of Suratha and Samadhi who are the recipients of Medhas' teaching. Suratha was a ruler of a principality. When his neighbouring principality was attacked by an invader, he felt no disturbance. Annexing the neighbouring principality, the assailants attacked his territory. Revolt began within too. As a result of this aggression from outside and subversion from within, Suratha was forced to flee through the forests, and he took shelter in the hermitage of Medhas, where he met the merchant Samadhi.

The predicament of Suratha has to be related to life, as issuing from an attitude which does not care what happens around oneself. What happens to the neighbour can happen to you tomorrow. So one has to be vigilant and caring, and not be self-involved.

The defeated Suratha, hiding in the hermitage, broods on his lost kingdom, his fair-weather ministers and followers, his treasury is being looted now. He broods on his favourite elephant and is anxious about how he is being treated. So he is suffering from a colossal sense of loss, hurt from relationship, and from blocked attachment.

The merchant Samadhi also suffers from attachment with his grown-up children and wife who conspired to throw him out.

So the predicament of both Suratha and Samadhi is more or less the same. In fact, their predicament is pretty universal. In the lives of us all there are periods, short or long when we lose power, lose control, periods when we suffer relational disillusionment and hurt. We lose clarity, look back in attachment. We are adrift, rudderless. In such periods we turn to outside help. In India we turn to astrologers, gurus—real or fake. In the West if one can afford it, one turns to psychotherapists for uncovering and healing.

Keeping in view the above, the seeker has to see Suratha and Samadhi as realities within ourselves.

To return to them as characters, Suratha and Samadhi turn to Medhas, the sage in residence. He tells them that their predicament comes from the Great Mother. They become curious about her. To satisfy their curiosity and to teach them about her, he tells them three stories, one after the other.

So it is a marathon story session. Before reciting the stories it is worthwhile to aver in passing that the story telling is a very ancient way of teaching. What one can transmit through a story—especially when the story is mythological cannot be conveyed through philosophy and moral preaching. The story has a way of settling in an once it settles, it starts clarifying one's consciousness and throwing light on one's problems.

II

So let us listen to the first story which is placed at the beginning of creation. In this story, God Vishnu, who should be regarded as omnipresence, is sleeping on his many-hooded snake, Shesha. Vishnu has a dream, a creative dream bidding him to start the creation anew. A lotus grows from his navel. On the lotus sits a four-headed child Brahma. But before Brahma can begin his job, Vishnu has another dream in which two demons Madhu and Kaitabha tumble out of his ears, engendered from the wax which has collected for eons in his ears. These two demons immediately attack child Brahma. He cries for help from Vishnu who sleeps away unheeding the distress signals. Realizing his helplessness, it occurs to Brahma that sleep which has enspelled Vishnu is a great power, an inexplicable power. So he prays to her to release Vishnu. His praise works. Vishnu wakes up. A battle royal begins between Vishnu and the demons. The battle goes on for five thousand years. And it is a draw. Now it is the turn of Vishnu to pray to the nameless Great Mother—who fills the demons with arrogance. The demons ask Vishnu to beg from them a boon. Vishnu asks that they should be killed at his hands. Demons realize that they should be killed at his hands. Demons realize that they have been tricked. They tell Vishnu that he should kill them where there be no water. You see that Vishnu was fighting in the primal water. Vishnu enlarges his thighs, chops the heads of the demons, placing their bodies on his thighs.

The story ends. It is a simple story, but meaning is very rich. The most obvious meaning is that even the gods have to fight anti-gods, that both come from within. From the point of view of practical, psychological work, the unconscious contains creative and regressive realities. One should identify them and throw one's weight on the creative side. But to really know one's creative and regressive sides, one has to go deeply into oneself. And that can be done through dream-work. It is important to note here that long before Freud discovered dream as the royal road into one's deeper self, the ancients grasped the importance of dreams. Anyway!

So dreams have not to be taken lightly. Dream is an in-between reality between wake and sleep. It has a great deal of deep guidance to give. Without being Freudian or Jungian, one should collect one's dreams, share them with friends. Even the telling of one's dreams gives energy. It augments one's vitality. One should meditate on its high components, identify the impediments coming in the way of their actualization, even as Vishnu did.

One should realize that overcoming the impediments is not that easy. One needs an effort sustained over a long period of time. In addition, *one needs the intervention of the divine* for a decisive overcoming.

III

In the story we are not told what Brahma did by way of creating the world after the death of Madhu and Kaitabha. But worshippers of the Great Mother Durga tell us that Brahma invoked nine forms of the Great Mother to do his job. These nine forms are called Navadurgas. The name shows that they are differentiated powers of Durga. In the pages that follow an attempt will be made to explain their names through associations. First Navadurga is Shailaputri which means the daughter of the mountain. In Indian mythology mountain is the abode of the Great God Shiva and of the father of Parvati from whom Durga comes. So, Shailaputri has a double relationship with the masculine, one as a daughter, second as a spouse.

Mountains in general are associated with strength, beauty, panorama and variety. They are not man-made like cities. So mountains denote height and depth, grandeur and gravity, so on and so forth. The listener or the reciter of Navadurgas is free to have his own felt system of association and amplifications.

The second Navadurga is Brahmacharini. Traditionally *brahmacharini* is thought of as a woman who is into celibacy. But the deeper meaning connotes one who moves in accord with truth, who listens to the impulses and promptings of her deeper creative self.

The third Navadurga is called Chandraghanta which in literal translation means the bell of the moon. The moon is the sap of life. If it were not for the moon, the sun will scorch the earth. There would be no life as we know of it. The moon is associated with beauty, enchantment, ecstasy.

Mythologically speaking moon has been worshipped in ancient Middle East as Astarte. The moon waxes and wanes unlike the sun. So it is associated with the waxing and waning of the psyche and its bio-rhythms.

The above associations and amplifications are enough. The reader is free to associate his own personal experience in the mundane, from dream and vision pertaining to beauty and romance, develop them through active imagination or meditation till the moon becomes a veritable gong. Psyche or mind must become a system of sustaining resonances that one can thrill too and draw from a fountain of energy.

The fourth Navadurga is Kushmanda—literally an egg incubating in the *kusha* grass. *Kusha* grass is especially known for its heat. So Kushmanda is the goddess of sexuality, fecundity, fertility. Kushmanda is also associated with female buttocks. At this point it should be mentioned that the Great Mother values the body, physicality unlike yoga which is antibody in its over-affiliation with the spirit. Kushmanda demands that one be in touch with one's deeper instinctuality.

The fifth Navadurga is Skandamata which means the Mother of Skanda. Skanda in Hindu mythology is the warrior son of Shiva. He is translated literally as the spurt of Shiva's semen. So Skandamata is the mother of valiant sons. It is a known fact that a strong, active relationship with the Great Mother imparts to one dynamism and energy.

So far the feminine has been identified as solid and massive, as truth, as romance, as sexuality, as imparter of heroism, but the sixth Navadurga, Katyayani meaning 'virgin', 'eternal virgin' throws a spanner in the path of identification. If she is virgin how can one hail her as Skandamata, as mother of Skanda. The idea is that the feminine, despite the grammar of relationships, she is enmeshed in and the qualities she stands for remains inviolate. So Katyayani refers to her being the other. Interestingly, she is invoked, Katyayani is at marriage for blessing. Therein is an extraordinary message, message being that feminine is not to be reduced to any known category. She simply is inviolate, other, unknown.

The seventh Navadurga is Kalaratri, 'night of time'. All life is unfolded by time. One does not know what time will bring. Job was happy, effluent, had a numerous family, commanded respect in the community, but his position suddenly changed into that of a pariah. He came to be rejected by his best friends. Came to live in a cemetery like Harishchandra. Nay, worse than the latter, he would sit scratching the sores on his back.

Kalaratri, viewed psychologically, is the 'night of the unconscious'. The latter has assumed a negative poise of toxic complexes and a hostile demeanour. Things have sharded. If one does not handle it right, one will end on a garbage heap of schizophrenia.

But one need not despair. One must survive and go on to attain the poise of Mahagauri, the Great Goddess of azure radiance, the eighth Navadurga, from where with the grace of the feminine, one goes to Siddhidhatri, the giver of excellences and attainments. Siddhidhatri is none other than Kali.

Though the exposition of the nine forms of the feminine that Brahma invoked to unfold the new cycle has been given in a sequential form, they should be understood in a space of simultaneity. They should be thought of as the *mandala* of Brahma.

To encapsulate, Mother Goddess is for heroes and renunciates. She is invoked in crises. We do not know really what she is. She is the ground of life of the unconscious. Understand her manifestations through dream, muse, meditation. And actualize her reality in life.

CHAPTER 2

World-Principle

IN the scripture the second story dealing with the rise of demon named Mahishasura, the defeat of the gods, Sun, Moon, Fire, Air, Ocean, etc. their going to Vishnu and Shiva for help, the creation of Chandi, the long drawn-out battle of Chandi and Mahishasura and his cohorts culminating in death follows, but a lot of time must have elapsed between the creation episode and the disruption of the World Order set up by Brahma and the delegation of functions and responsibilities to the gods in Brahma's scheme. Though the story begins in media res, Mahishasura could not have just come up suddenly and defeated the gods just like that.

From another Puranic story we know that Mahishasura is the son of an old yogi and a buffalo. So one has to imagine a certain type of a childhood for the orphan Mahishasura, a deprived youth who sought power as a colossal compensatory drive which he finally secured by defeating the Vedic gods.

In the scriptural story the Vedic gods are shown going to Brahma, their creator and apprising him with their hiding from the iniquities of Mahishasura. Brahma takes them to Vishnu. It so happened that Shiva was there also. Listening to the misdeeds of Mahishasura, Shiva and Vishnu became exceeding wroth. Brahma also exuded wrath in sympathy, rather, identification. The defeated gods too caught the vibration of anger. So from the anger of the gods a primordial fire enveloped the sky, racing nowhere, nowthere. In course of time this fire took the form of a woman called Chandi.

Before going any further with the battle and the killing of the generals of Mahishasura it is worthwhile commenting upon the key-motifs in the story detailed so far. Mahishasura symbolizes power and bestiality. His defeating the gods symbolises stripping the world of role differentiation and legitimacy. Everybody has a role big or small in the job situation and in the family. So one must not allow one's role to be whittled and inroaded. Role is part of *rita*, order of things. And one should not rob others of their respective roles in power flexing and aggrandisement, because that is a demonic trait.

The anger of the gods should not be mistaken as ordinary anger. It is rage or righteous indignation. Rage springs from concern for the good and is directed against the bad. This rage in Sanskrit is called *raudra*. It is not *krodha*. And *raudra* must not be stopped and it must spring from the whole of you, from the divine portion which is there in most of us, however enmeshed it may be.

The arise of Chandi from the conjoint rage of the gods has to be understood in the above sense.

Since Chandi is an archetype of totality, like any archetype it has to be processed, differentiating and endowing and investing on its various structural levels variegated qualities.

It is this subtly differentiated Chandi who goes into action against a veritable array of demons such as Chamar, Chikshura, Asiloma, Uddhata, Durmukha, etc. Chamar is sycophancy while Chikshura is aggression sharp as a knife. Asiloma also represents aggression except that his aggression is much more than that of Chikshura, the literal meaning of Asiloma being a fellow from whose hair pores swords jut out. These demons represent bad, perverse qualities, *gunas,* traits. But one should not over allegorise. They should be seen as flesh and blood persons because one comes across lots and lots of people who are possessed by these traits.

Uddhata represents inflation. Inflation is an innocuous word, but inflation is very bad. The inflated person ascribès to himself much more than what he possesses. To sustain that delusion of seeing more into himself, he has to reduce others, and not see their merits.

In reading about these demons of Mahishasura one has to see them in life, in society. Better than introspection, of course, is active imagination or meditation.

After the principal demons together with their hosts are wiped out, Mahishasura has to come into the open to fight Chandi. He cannot hide any more behind his pals who are no more. In any work, inner and outer, after the outer peripheries and settlements have been cleared, one has to take on the real problem, the vile antagonist.

Mahishasura is, as said earlier, a perverse combination of force and beastliness. In his fight with Chandi he comes in the form of buffalo, stampeding wild buffalo, as an elephant, and finally as half-buffalo half-human. It is in the last form that he gets the coup de grace, meaning being that it is not enough to be half-human begging to be excused. The demonic must humanise all the way.

After the death of Mahishasura, the gods praise Chandi, in the praise they make one observation to the effect that Chandi in killing Mahishasura has given him the boon of transformation. That means that Chandi is not settling any score or feud, but is using her amalgamated god-force to change the lives of the perverse people. Sure, she is ridding the world of the bad and ugly squad. But the encounter of the latter with her, though devastating for them from the ego angle, is transformative from the self angle.

II

On the Chandi path one has to be extremely active and vigorous in the world. The Chandi process is essentially for bold and heroic functioning. In fact, one can say that Suratha who is one of the two listeners of Medhas' marathon story session drops off after the Chandi tale. Invigorated and infused, he goes back, organizes his forces, assaults, and recaptures his lost duchy or kingdom. He does not need the infusion of the third story which is a demand for very sustained and refined work on oneself.

CHAPTER 3

The Tale of Transformation

THE third and the last recital of Medhas is meant for the adepts. As a story it is the richest in dramaturgy, realized characters, in narrative elan, and in texture.

In this story, as in the previous story two brothers, Nishumbha and Shumbha, have taken over the world. Nishumbha is an intellectual par excellence and Shumbha is a yogi who has experienced void or *shunyata.* Yet both are placed in the demon category. The idea is that an intellectual and a yogi for the most part are heartless. As such their power trip is subtle. It is hidden even from them. Unlike in the second story the gods are not just in hiding, but they have lost to the two brothers their mana and luminosity. For example, as told in the story the two brothers have taken from the gods such as Brahma his swan, from Indra, his elephant, so on and so forth. They have everything going for them. It appears that their diarchy will last for a long time because they have the trappings of the divine, though they are not divine.

Like in the second story the gods go looking for the Great Mother because she had promised to them last time around that they should approach her in the hour of their need. It so happens that when they were praying on the banks of Ganges, Mother Parvati had come out after taking her bath. She asked the gods who they were invoking and praying too whereupon a golden emanation which had come from Parvati replied that they were praying to her. Leaving the emanation to them, Parvati went herself to Mount Kailasa.

Before going further with the story this point of emanation deserves to be specially underscored. It is believed in mysticism, East and West, that when one fervently prays to god, any god or goddess, he, she comes in the form of an emanation to listen to and help. Speaking psychologically an archetype comes in the form of a symbol, an image-cluster. Of course, an emanation does not have to be visual. It may come in the form of a body of feelings, in the form of mood. It is further believed that mystics or adepts have an emanation peculiar to them, that they can dialogue with and use for imparting knowledge, for removing obstacles, for conferring blessings.

This emanation of Parvati repairs to the mountains where she is seen by Chanda and Munda, two followers of Nishumbha and Shumbha. They return post-haste to the capital and report to the brothers that they have seen a jewel in the hills, the like of which they do not have in their possession. So the relationship of Nishumbha and Shumbha begins in fascination, with infatuation. They dispatch Sugriva, their messenger known for sweetness and courtesy. He is instructed to bring her with due formality. Sugriva who is the epitome of courtesy approaches the goddess, dwells on the greatness and glory of his two masters, impresses upon her how happy she would be being married to one or both of them. The Goddess replies that she is impressed, but cannot oblige a mere messenger whereupon the latter loses his cool and threatens that in that case she would be dragged by her hair. At this point it is interesting to note that Sugriva's courtesy is not innate. It is skin-deep directed to an objective, that too a low degrading one of procuring. It is not value-interiorized courtesy.

Sugriva returns to his masters and reports the failure of his mission. The latter who possess the power of gods and who are not used to their commands not being obeyed, go into livid rage. They instruct an old guard, a life-time loyalist, Dhumralochan to capture the lady to bring her by force. Dhumralochan goes forthwith with an army only to be incinerated cohorts and others by the fiery roars of her lion. Only one bloke is spared to carry the tale of the holocaust.

It is important to know the identity of Dhumralochan. He is what his name signifies. He is smoke-eyed. He does not see things clearly. His sight is gross devoid of fine perception, devoid of feeling, devoid of subtlety. Dhumralochan is a legion. Bulk of mankind is in the locale of Dhumralochan. Dhumralochan is a patsy. It is not surprising that he dies without even the benefit of a battle.

In inner work, even though there be actually factually Dhumralochan in society, he has to be seen deep inside oneself. Till one becomes enlightened and grows into the gift of luminous sight, there are always dark areas of imprecision, shadow stereotypy inside oneself. There are dark areas in regard to friends, colleagues, in regard to one's family members even. To take care of this problem, one has to cleanse the doors of perception and the vents of feelings. And one better believe that it is not easy. In the tale Dhumralochan is destroyed by a single roar of the lion who in this context is truth. But how many of us hear the roar of awakening that clearly?

After the death of Dhumralochan, distraught Shumbha sends two doughty warriors, Chanda and Munda, the duo who had seen the Goddess first and had given to Shumbha the first report of her beauty which had incited his appetite to possess like one possesses a material object. Seeing Chanda and Munda advancing at the head of their armies, Goddess Durga for the first time knitted her brow in great anger which made Kali emerge from her brow. Kali was black, red in eyes, lean in stomach, fierce-looking, carrying appropriately a staff topped with skulls. Kali asked her sister what for she had been emanated whereupon Durga said that she wanted her to chop off the heads of Chanda and Munda.

Now it is important to pause here and explain the symbolism of Chanda and Munda to understand the behest of Durga. Chanda is lust and Munda is anger. Lust is the misuse of sexuality, not seeing the latter as a source of relationship, bonding. Munda is fiercely mental, survives and thrives on specious reasoning to justify? Chanda's desires and his own power and domination drives. Chanda and Munda as a duo constitute a perverse, malformed alliance of nuts and neurons. Some very famous people—they can be scientists, litterateurs—are in the Chanda-Munda locale. In the *Bible* comparable figures are Gog and Magog. In literature, Cardinal and Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*. The reader should look around and see Chanda and Munda in the circles that they know of. But in inner work Chanda and Munda should be located precisely in the sex and head centre. In tantric Kundalini mystical physiology Chanda is viewed as a major shadow in the Svadhishthanachakra and Munda as an affliction in the Ajnachakra. It is believed in the Shakta circles that with the death of Chanda and Munda there is a partial piercing of the two *chakras*. Sexuality becomes creative and intellectuality becomes direct and intuitive and considerably luminous. It ceases to be heavy, mired in concepts and categories.

In Shaktic vocabulary one ceases to be a fettered animal and becomes a *vira*, a hero who is not into caste, creed, family consciousness. One becomes free of guilt, shame, false modesty, fake compassion, sentimental gesturing. One becomes real. Ego-consciousness takes a back seat. One has a sense of the self, its vastness, richness of content and texture, seeing the *other* in oneself and oneself in the other. And this partial transformation is the handiwork of Kali who is Durga in her divine, dynamic, violent poise.

This Kali chops off Chanda and Munda's heads. In the context of this performance of her she comes to be known as Chamunda who is invoked in specific in Durga *mantra* in the phrase Chamundayi Vicche.

With the death of Chanda and Munda, Shumbha, feeling really threatened for the first time, sends Raktabija into action, Raktabija being nearly invincible because from every drop of his blood an identical Raktabija comes into form. To combat Raktabija Goddess Durga presses all the major gods, into battle, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Indra, Kumar, Varaha, Narasingha,—all assume female forms, the idea being that female of the species is fiercer in animus. Durga herself and Kali leap into action. Raktabija because of his ability to regenerate fills the battle ground with his own clones. Goddesses are finding it hard to cope with them till Durga thinks of a stratagem. She tells Kali that she will chop off Raktabija's head and the latter should drink the blood before it falls on the ground. What more could Kali ask for. She enjoys the blood drink. The stratagem is carried out. Raktabija falls dehydrated without blood, the clones are mopped up by the goddesses who berserk in the festival of victory. It would be interesting now to speculate when Raktabija falls dehydrated without blood, the clones are mopped up by the goddesses who berserk in the festival of victory.

It would be interesting now to speculate who Raktabija or what Raktabija is. Raktabija is the ego complex, the root of ignorance, of *avidya*. *Avidya* is not ignorance in the scholastic sense. *Avidya* is hardening of the ego, identification with it so that one considers oneself as better, superior, separate when the Reality is in mutuality, solidarity in the divine. The reality is developing a cosmic sense and making it as the platform for pleoramic mystique. It has, however, to be clearly understood that what is being held forth is not the elimination of the ego, for that leads to schizophrenia, but its depotentiation depriving it of blood, cutting its relationship with the arrogant intellect Nishumbha for it to find its due place in the divine scheme.

With the death of ego, both the brother Nishumbha and Shumbha come to the battlefield themselves. Nishumbha has certain *siddhis*. Eight moons adorn his shield. Shumbha, of course, is a veritable sun, but his fierce light is that of void, not the light of feeling, love. Nishumbha is the first to perish. Shumbha chides the goddess that she fights with the help of others and invites her to a one-to-one combat. Goddess withdraws all forms into herself. The battle between her and Shumbha takes place, now on terra firma, now in the atmosphere, in the sky. Finally she hits him in the chest while they are grappling in the sky and he falls on the ground, breathing his last.

The symbolism of this fight is hard to decipher. Upto Raktabija one can make sense of the story. But with Nishumbha and Shumbha one is on difficult ground. Suffice it to mention that Nishumbha is the overhead which splits the one into archetypes, but cuts itself off from the source while Shumbha is the overhead which splits the one into archetypes, but cuts itself off from the source while Shumbha is the void much too overprized, the black hole. The void must be pierced, the black hole must be rent to free the light swallowed or trapped in it.

Of course, one does not have to go for such a hifi interpretation of Nishumbha and Shumbha. One can think of Nishumbha as an ideologue who is sensitive to his categories and abstractions and forgets in the blindness of his cathexis the miracle and mystery of existence. The other is there, not for the dialectic of relating, but for easy conquest, cheap possession.

Shumbha has his peaks and trances like yogis have, satories and *samadhis,* but normal, *sahaj* functioning is impaired. Insofar as relational libido with feeling charge is missing, he is into his *abhava* void trip, negating fine differentiation which is the hallmark of a feeling culture. He is the swallowing Vritasura or Ouroborous, to speak in depth clinical terms from which he emerges from time to time to the stimulus of power or to the call of fascination. In his case, the fascination is to the anima which he does not want to earn. So his consciousness is a small island. The rest is voided.

II

With the last story the marathon story session is over. But Suratha and Samadhi are brought back, the original listeners. For a long while they had receded into the background in the excited rendering of the epic battles. Through the gods indirectly they are told that in the ages to come in their need once again, the Goddess will come to their rescue in the following forms. Nanda Bhagwati, Raktadantika, Bhima, Kali, Durga, Shakambhari, Shatakshi, Bhramari. The parole is mythopoeic and cultural. The idea is that the Great Mother who is the Unconscious and Anima Mundi or the World Soul is ceaseless in her manifestations. One has to be alive to her visitations in oneself and in the world, for she is inner and outer both. For that, for her gleams to be meaningful, one has to be *bahirmukhi*, extroverted and *antarmukhi*, introverted. One has to be finally centroverted.

The *sadhana* of Durga demands that both the goddesses and the demons have to be seen within oneself. Religions such as Christianity and Islam see Evil as coming from outside, but in Hinduism it is not so. Madhu and Kaitabha come from the ear filth of Vishnu whereas Brahma does from his navel.

In the non-Hindu mindset one can project the demonic outside oneself on the other and go scot-free. In the non-Hindu mindset one can indulge in the projective shadow no end and feel righteous about oneself. But the Durga process enjoins that you see the shadow and the self, the slime and the sublime in yourself and address yourself to strengthening the sublime till you shine, truly shine, and process the slime till it is refined and amalgamated. In the first story Madhu and Kaitabha become the earth on which Brahma builds his creation. In the second story Mahishasura does not go through death, but his rebirth and transformation is stated in the laud of the gods to the Devi.

It was mentioned right at the outset that Medhas' stories are interspersed with lauds of *stotrams.* While the stories impart an understanding of the Great Mother in a dramatic mode and in a narrative way, *stotrams* focus shapely on her qualities in epiphanic chants. Though most of the *stotrams* are mythopoeic, religio-cultural in their parole, one *stotram* is a rapturous catalogue of her qualities unfolded in a panoramic sweep. In the fourth chapter this *stotram* in particular, will be the subject of an extensive commentary.

CHAPTER 4

Stotrams

STOTRAMS as indicated in the last paragraph of chap. 3 are an integral part of Durga-*sadhana*. *Durga Saptashati* has four powerful *stotrams*. The first is by Brahma who calls upon Yoganidra to remove her spell on Vishnu so that aroused from sleep he can give a spirited fight to Madhu and Kaitabha, the two demons, which culminates in her victory.

Brahma hails Yoganidra as Svadha, Svaha, Nada. Svadha is offering to the ancestors, Svaha to the gods while Nada is the inner sound-vibration which creates, preserves, and dissolves. But what is Yoganidra? Etymologically, *yoganidra* is yogic sleep. What is so wonderful about it for it to be hailed as a divine power. We know wake state in which the senses together with the mind are connecting with the world outside. We know dream state which is free, looser than wake in which consciousness using part of past experiences together with recent impressions creates a symbolic world, which, if understood, sheds light on the dreamer's present position, his/her inside, and the future prospects. There are so many ways of understanding and utilizing dreams. The dream state is not understood by most people. The sleep state negates both wake and dream. We do not know much about sleep in the present state of knowledge. But we know that it is very important. Though the Vedantists postulate a fourth state called *turiya*, which, according to them, is superior to wake, dream, and sleep because it is *samadhi*, but the fact is that sleep overpowers even *samadhi*.

In fact, *yoganidra* is not ordinary sleep. It is, to speak psychologically, the Reality which underlines the conscious, subconscious, and the collective unconscious. It is Ouroboros. The symbol of the Ouroboros is snake with its tail in its mouth. Shesha does not have his tail in his mouth. Just as well, he has too many mouths. In any case Vishnu is resting on this Ouroboric snake. So *yoganidra* is prior to all the four states. It contains ancestral memories, archetypal realities, and it is the Life-Principle as Vibration. In tantric symbology it is Mahakali with ten heads, twenty arms, ten legs, and it is kinetic and depicted in a running form.

Perhaps, it is possible to suffuse wake, dream, sleep with this kinetic consciousness. At least Krishnamurti thinks that it is though he speaks of it without using any terminology.

The psycho-spiritual idea behind this *stotram* is that there is a reserve and mysterious power in the Ouroboric deep in each one of us which must be invoked in times of stress and crises through prayer to this unknown nameless tremendum, and that this numinosum is female, though androgynous. No final form can be given to this power because it is beyond our comprehension.

The second *stotram* is by the gods to Chandi after she has killed Mahishasura. It is a tribute to her Power and Compassion. Paradoxically she is seen as being compassionate to Mahishasura for having dispatched him to heaven, no Hades, through death. The idea is that she has transformed Mahishasura in that his power in post-transformative state will be in the service of goodness. If one were to find a Greek equivalent to this Mahishasura, he would be compared to Chiron who helps Zeus against the titans.

The third *stotram* is to the goddess soon after the killing of Chanda and Munda. This *stotram* lends itself to psycho-ethical commentary as it is a rapturous catalogue and ensemble of the qualities of the Goddess (as Mahasaraswati).

This *stotram* is an ensemble of qualities attributed to the Mother or female power. Though the *stotram* is in a progressive sequence and has a cumulative thrust, the reader is free to relate to the qualities that he needs.

To begin with she is saluted as vitality inhering in all things. Vitality in Western psychological terms can be equated with libido. Each being should have his/her own libido and draw it from others. Then she is hailed as intelligence. A person may be very finely endowed, but may not be able to actualize it for want of energy.

Thirdly she is sleep because the latter restores one's energy. Fourthly, she is Hunger. Hunger is not just hunger for food. One should differentiate whether one wants an apple, a peach, either or both. Fifthly, she is luminous shadow, which is a power. There is not point to suppressing, repressing. Luminous or bright shadow is not an error. Sixthly, she is invoked as Shakti, as divine force. The idea is that with the preceding five one cannot come into one's power or mana.

Then she is hailed as *trishna. Trishna* has to be separated from *kshudha* which appeared earlier in the catalogue chant in that *trishna* is more subliminal. In order to find out what one's *trishna* is, one has to go into one's deep subliminal personality to know one's subtler desires and complicated hankerings. And that needs a lot of uncovering. While *kshudha* deals with one's basic hungers, food, clothing, shelter, sex, self-esteem, *trishna* pertains to desires which are tied with one's teleos, entelechy, with one's purpose in life. So *trishna* is a hankering from one's daimen, from one's soul.

Lajja, which in English is translated as modesty has very special connotations in Indian culture. It is opposite to self-assertion, i.e., showing off. If you are beautiful, you don't flaunt it. One is reminded of Yeats' poem, "A Prayer for My Daughter" in which the poet does not want his daughter to be too beautiful and become narcissistic as a result. *Lajja* is regarded as a psychic and spiritual quality. There is a certain physical shrinking from brazenness and inflation. You present yourself as less than what you are. You are not into competition and conflict.

Lajja is not to be equated with shyness, being tongue-tried at a social party because one feels less and inadequate, far less with neurobiological shyness problematic in which one sweats, has clammy hands. In neurobiological psychogenic shyness, one is moronic sometimes even when one is very bright. Such morbid shyness in shaktic ideology is regarded as a fetter which, needless to say, has to be broken. Of course, some people are temperamentally shy. But that is a different story altogether.

Jati which is also affirmed as a category in the laud is not to be equated with what passes for caste. *Jati* comprises one's soul *sanskara* which must be expressed and dynamically externalised. That, of course, should not mean disrespect for the other, his/her *jati*. No superiority or inferiority is involved. What is involved is the recognition of difference and variety, not some ossified, petrified exercise which is pedalled in Indian polity and pathologically exploited by politicians. For *jati* is not a numeral in the vote bank, but a reality which includes one's civilizational clan individuality, yet transcends it to embrace one's nature. *Jati* is biocultural, but existential-spiritual finally.

Given the right relationship with *buddhi, kshudha, chhaya, shakti, trishna, jati, lajja,* and the gestalting of the foregoing ensemble, it is not surprising that the aspirant will come to peace, and this peace is not based on suppression and self-mutilation. It is based on self-identification and one's relationship with conscious power. It is a peace which come unsought. Perhaps, in this context it is worthwhile quoting a poem of Swami Vivekananda on it to denote the kind of peace which descends on a person in the Durga process.

Behold, it comes in might
The Power that is not power,

The light that is in darkness,
The shade in dazzling light
It is not joy nor sorrow
But that which is between
It is not night nor morrow,
But that which joins them in,

Then he calls it 'the calm of heart', 'love'
'that stands alone', 'beauty never seen'
'the void whence', 'rose creation,
And that where it returns.'

This peace rooted in self-knowledge, self-identification, power and process naturally, *ipso facto* leads to *kanti*. *Kanti* is lustre of gold. So it is spiritual radiance, but its impact is felt in every part of life and in every portion of one's being. This spiritual radiance does not bask in its own light of *kaivalya*. It is not: One remains/Heaven's light forever shines/Earth's shadows fly of shelley. It is not the light experienced in the flight of the Alone to the Alone. It imbues life. Hence it is followed by Lakshmi who in Indian mythic lore is presented as the Goddess of wealth. Indeed, she is that, but is not confined to houses, real estate, booze, and bank balances. She is Beauty and Harmony. Very deeply regarded she has a very fluent consciousness. She becomes *vritti*, mental modification. In yoga *chittavritti nirodha* is highly valued, but in the Durga process *vrittis,* thoughts, emotions are valued because they are the waves on the stream of consciousness that is you.

After *vritti,* Goddess is hailed as *smriti*. *Smriti* is memory, not just the memory available to you, but memory stored up layer upon layer inside. Some thinkers namely Krishnamurti want to do away with memory as a kind of neurosis which comes in the way of experiencing everything in a spontaneous and fresh way. They have a point. Some have very unpleasant memories, stacks and loads. They have to be thinned, if not erased. At least the bad charge of pain adhering to them has to be recharged or depotentiated. There are bitter, nasty, toxic memories.

They are like hags and trolls which have to be kicked out of one's house. It is not easy to do so. In psychotherapy such memories are uncovered and catharted. But memory which gathers the pleasant and the unpleasant cannot be jettisoned. You cannot throw the baby out with the bath-water. Vishnu had some unpleasant memories. They were so bad that they oozed out from the filth in his ears in the form of demons, who attacked his creative side. So Vishnu had to kill them.

So in the Durga process you should list and catalogue all your memories, differentiate them, consolidate the good ones and destroy the bad ones.

After memory the Vedic gods pay homage to *daya,* compassion. This compassion is active, it involves giving to remove the suffering of others, to bring cheer to their lives. So one should have both material opulence and spiritual excellence and intellectual acumen. If you are an intellectual bankrupt, you cannot gift ideas, practical, moral, metaphysical to others. If you are devoid of spiritual stirrings and aspirations, you cannot refine life.

In Buddhism compassion is valued very highly. Compassion is the crest-jewel of Buddha. The other crest jewel is insight. The two go hand in hand. Some people, nay, vast majority think that if they do something for another, they are losing their money, time, knowledge. They do not realize that the other is you yourself in another form. So what you do for others comes back to you augmented, ten-fold, thirty-fold, hundred-fold. Of course, that is not the motivation in *daya.*

It is interesting to note that *daya* is followed by *tushti* which is being replete with contentment.

The last two realities in the catalogue chant are the Great Mother and *bhranti.* The latter in translation denotes illusion and delusion. The idea is that ultimately it is Mother's World and you cannot pride yourself to know it in the Vedantic absolute sense. You have your spiritual, moral, material endowment as a result of *sadhana,* but you cannot presume to know her. She throws even the sages into a whirlpool of delusion. So it is an egregious folly to vaunt that you have the key to the ultimate mysteries.

The great devotees of Kali or Durga finally come to the realization as given in the following song of Ram Prasad:

Kali, my Mother, really black?
The naked one, though Black she seems,
Lights the Lotus of the heart,
Men call Her black, but yet my mind
Does not believe that she is so:

Now she is white, now red, now blue,
Now she appears as yellow, too.

I hardly know who mother is,
Though I have pondered all my life:
Now *Pursusha* now *Prakriti,*
And now the void, She seems to be.
To meditate on all these things,
Confounds poor Kamalakanta's wits.

The fourth *stotram* is again a laud by the gods to Durga for having freed the world from Nishumbha and Shumbha. She is hailed as 'Sarvamangalamangalai' who bestows all-round welfare and auspiciousness, 'Sarvarthasadhikaye', she who is all-enabling, accomplishing power, 'Tryambikaye', she who is the conjoint form of three mothers, contextually in terms of *Durga Saptashati,* Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati. Of course, if you want to look at her as the spouse of Tryambaka Shiva, she is Sun, Moon, Fire, the granter of all potencies, will, feeling, intuition, giver of *dharma, artha, kama.* Not *moksha* because the latter comes when the triune have been fulfilled. Tryambikaye is the Goddess of manifold realizations resulting from myriad activities performed in time. She is not into eternity. She is into realizing all parts in yourself. She is into level and sub-levels in your personality and demands awareness of these levels in the world.

Her emblem, apart from shield, sword, blessing *mudra* is pomegranate, efflorescence of hundreds of shiny, glossy seeds. She is *Purusha* and *Prakriti,* the masculine and the feminine in the Shaktic, not Sankhyan sense, joined together in the brooch of time.

She is also hailed as Gauri, the white radiance of Eternity in *coniunctio* with time, the Great Endless time.

The parole in this laud is cultural-mythic. But if one could go underneath the veneer, one is dealing with psycho-spiritual realities in the microcosm and social-historical realities in the macrocosm.

To cut it short, pleased with the laud, the Goddess herself volunteers that in the times to come to overcome a demon called Durgam, the most difficult and invincible, she will manifest herself as Nanda Bhagwati, Raktadantika, Bhimakali, Durga, Shakambhari, Shatakshi, Bhramari. There is no need to explain the symbology of these forms as that would require a separate chapter. What is important from the point of the process is that feminine power is ceaseless in her forms and manifestations. What is important is to experience her symbolic activity in one's psyche, in the dynamic of relationship, in the world.

She is Aphrodite, Greek Goddess of Love, Athena, Goddess of city, society, polity, Durga-Chandi of the second tale, Artemis, Goddess of hunt and war of Kali in Indian mythology. However, to explain nonetheless. Nanda is beautiful, golden, Aphroditic signature on Aphrodite, Raktadantika is Aphroditic, but more instinctual and libidinous. Bhimakali is Artemis. Durga need not be explained. Shakambhari is the branch that feeds, sugarcane sweet. Shatakshi is compassion and irrigates the barren fields with her copious tears. Bhramari is a colony of bumblebees, a veritable cloud which descends on the wicked and stings them to death. In short, they are all admixtures of Aphrodite, Athena, and Artemis.

Now that the stories have been given, and one *stotram* explained at length, it is worthwhile telling how to work with the Durga scripture now that one has some hang. Traditionally one works with it by reciting the Navaran *mantra, Om aing hring kling Chamundayi Vicche. Om* is *sat-chit-ananda. Sat* is material existence, *chit* is consciousness, *ananda* is bliss. The three come together, though theoretically one can emphasize and enlarge one, but it is not possible, and not practical either. For instance, if one blisses out too much and prematurely, it can obliterate consciousness, damage the material envelope, the container and vessel of consciousness.

Aing is the seed-syllable of Mahasaraswati who is the presiding deity of the third tale, *hring* is the seed-syllable of Mahalakshmi, the presiding deity of the second tale, and *kling* the seed-syllable of Mahakali, the presiding deity of the first tale. *Chamundayi Vicche* means that the *sadhaka* moves with the force of the three deities which means that he is not into blocking their movement through ego-constriction or inhibition. The complete *mantra* is silently recited in meditation in the morning and/or evening for a certain duration. Once a week, preferably on Friday, the day of Goddess of Love, the entire scripture or one tale is recited with fervour.

In the beginning *mantra* is mechanical. One builds a certain quantity, but once it takes root, it starts humming from inside, churning consciousness, giving one experiences. In the traditional *mantra-sadhana* you are told to watch the experiences, imagistic, hallucinatory, affective, cognitive, and not identify. The idea is to let the subconscious empty itself out through a flow till pure consciousness is experienced. But that is not the Shaktic way which involves not just catharsis, but penetrating the epiphanic experiences with a view to imbuing and stamping one's consciousness till it becomes a vehicle of Durga. The Durga way is to write a signature on the archetype.

Another way which does not negate the traditional way and which has been implied in the course of telling and analyzing the tales is to enter into a dialogue with the cavalcade of demons from Madhu to Shumbha. Take the wax-engendered Madhu. We have heard a lot of filth from others about others which comes in the way of creative dealing with people and with our own creativity. We have to honestly and introspectively identify what we have taken out from outside and go for ear cleaning. In addition, we have piled a lot of residues in our brains because of bad linkages between memory, mind, and computer intellect. That too has to the sorted out, catharted, and cleaned. Where the Durga process differs from Western psychotherapy is in its insistence that the uncovering and the elimination of the bad contents and the mal-movements cannot be done without invoking the divine. In the Chandi tale there are so may demons, a veritable galore, not just two. Find out how often you play the Chamar role, sugar and spice and all that is nice, to take in a decent guy to do him in; Uriah Heap of Dickens' *David Copperfield* is a Chamar. Find out on whom you wield the knife, in what situations, for what reasons? Why be a Chikshura? What is the pay off? If today you are a Chikshura, tomorrow you will be an Asiloma. So one must lower the level of aggression. Surely you don't want to be a Bidal, a tomcat haw-hawing before the mirror. So monitor the levels of aggression and reduce them, though ideally one should destroy them in seed-state with the help of Chandi. For mere uncovering without commitment to a higher value won't work. As for inflation, if today you are Uddhata, tomorrow you would be Udagar. Rightly therefore, John the Baptist says, "Level the mountains, fill the valleys, make the crooked straight."

Find out when you behave like a small-time Mahisha, scratch dirt with your hooves, and kick it in the face of the divine. One is not saying that one should be taken in by the Pseudo-divine, the charlatans and the con men. In the Chandi tale one is dealing with schizoid paranoia of bestiality. Sooner we are through, better for all concerned. When we carry too much shadow, we expel it in the environment. We are psychic polluters.

A dear friend recently said *vis-à-vis* the cavalcade of demons we carry around that considering the defiling movements in us that it is no wonder that we are born again and again because we have to work out so much from our system. Of course, we don't have to dishearten that much, because according to the scripture Suratha and Samadhi attained enlightenment in three years. Western therapy takes a decade, even more. Even then enlightenment is not in sight because the divine factor is not espoused. In the Durga process you identify your faults and turn them over to Her to do with them what she wishes.

In addition to identifying the filth and the dirt, the vile and wicked, one has to dialogue with the divine. If you have some visitations, big and small, you can do active imagination. For Durga way is that of active imagination, more than voiding or blanking type meditation. If you are a poet, write poems. If a painter, sculptor; paint, sculpt. Express your imagination in relationship to the divine even as sage has done who has written or bequeathed the tales.

Make a list of your dreams in which there are numinous sparks. Fan the sparks into your own domestic *homa* fire and put your negative complexes into it with Svaha. Brahma hails the Devi as Svaha in his laud.

Deepen your relationship with the ancestors by dialoguing with them lovingly. She is Svadha.

You are born to expand, enlarge through Svahas and Svadhas, through her visitations till you become her signature, spokesman/woman and impact upon the world meaningfully. You are not here to withdraw, cop out like a yogi, take refuge in a hermitage and set up a separate reality.

CHAPTER 5

Walpurgisnacht

WALPURGISNACHT is German term, referring to the night of April 30 when the witches come out riding their broomsticks and on black dogs to hold a converse/revel with their master the Devil, especially on the Brocken in the Harz mountains. They are free on the eve of May 1 because May 1 is the day of St. Walpurga abbess of Heindenneim. The idea is that once St. Walpurga is born, the evil represented in the revelry of the witches with the Devil must disappear or go in hiding. A still deeper idea is that prior to the establishment of St. Walpurga, evil exposes itself all the way.

The symbology of Walpurgisnacht is especially applicable to the Durga process. In Introspective schools, be they be of Ego-state, or Jungian all parts to oneself which are suppressed and repressed and held down are uncovered. In the Ego-state school while the uncovering is going on, no judging is done. No attempt is made to evaluate the uncovered contents either, the idea being any premature evaluation will kill the uncovering process. Once the uncovering is complete, uncovering of the good and the bad, the high and the low, an attempt is to augment the good, weaken the low with a view to integrating and energizing the personality.

In the Jungian process shadow is unveiled, its territory seized, high land identified, low land cleared, cleansed, its reclamation and amalgamation with the ego secured before the ego goes on a greater journey to the feminine and the self which is cross-gender.

Durga process in comparison with the Western process is much more violent and combative. The demons are brought out all the way and killed decisively, irrevocably. Take for example the first tale in which the demons are Madhu and Kaitabha, the former sweet in tongue and in taste, the latter a wriggling worm. They are engendered in ear filth. And they are against one's creativity. The idea is that all dirty residues afflicting the head have to be torched. To make it concrete. All humans carry memory residues which are baneful, painful, deleterious. They come in the way of fresh perception and creativity. Let us say I have had bad experiences with the in-laws at the time of marriage and subsequently. These residues come in the way of my creative functioning with my spouse. Though decades have passed, these residues don't go away.

But creative functioning is always Brahmic. It is always in the present. Mahakali in the Durga process demands all residues from the dirt-deposits from the past must die, must be killed and drowned, in the primal waters. And what results therefrom is the birth of eros.

In the second Chandi tale, like it was clarified in its relevant exposition that there is a veritable cavalcade of demons and each demon comes to the battle with legions and armies, with chariots and war animals such as horses and elephants. These descriptions should not be dismissed as hyperbolical and fantastic, for that would be superficial reading. The idea is that you have to see to your defects, shortcomings, bad tendencies, rotten *sanskaras,* not just with the ictus of weak introspection, but with the aid of Active imagination. Take Chamar, for example. He is a sycophant whose sycophancy is in the service of self-aggrandisement. The sycophant has expectations. More often that not, he has designs. And when he does not succeed, he becomes super-aggressive. He becomes Chikshura.

So from the perspective of Chamar-Chikshura duo, one has to uncover all thoughts, feelings, acts in that locality. The duo have to be dismembered. And one has to free oneself from that with the fire of Chandi. It would be a mistake to think of Chamar-Chikshura as flat character/s. The reality represented by them is many-layered.

Take Bhaskal again who scatters people on a wide front. Bhaskal is a fellow who suffers from a chronic, ingrained aggression. He fights in the street, on the road, in the bus, in the train, and place, any time. He takes this adrenality as a sign of macho strength and masculinity. I am sure you must have met people like that. It is interesting to note in the story that whereas Chamar is killed by Chandi lion, Bhaskal is personally dismembered by Chandi.

So from the point of inner work one has to catalogue all instances of one's misbehaviour, one's aggressive crudities, make a dung-heap and then make a bonfire.

The process one follows with Bhaskal has to be followed with all other demons, be they Bidal, Uddhata, Udagar.

So Chandi process is not meant for those who cannot take the fire of spiritual tension, high voltage. You cannot justify, rationalize. You cannot say I loved my son, my spouse, my friend, but did not know how to express. You are not a dumb ox. So as a signature on Chandi archetype, you are a highly differentiated and complex ensemble of gods, not a pell-mell collage. You have to be angry with yourself, against your faults and perversities, and win. Only then you are a hero. Otherwise, you are a pusillanimous, whimpering brat like Mahishasura. Despite Mahishasura being a mighty, polymorphous, perverse, shape-shifter, he is a brat with an orphan complex, having lost his yogi father and buffalo mother, first at the time of conception, second soon after delivery. So he spends his time seeking power. He is not into love. He does not develop other parts of his personality. Amazingly most of us are in Mahishasura's locality. We grow not into the relational principle and its endless expanse. He did not get effected by Chandi's beauty. Instead, scrapes dirt with his hooves to toss it at Chandi's face.

So the death of the power drive is the beginning of one's transformation. There is so much in life to see and appreciate, so much to relate to, not just in humans, but in nature too. Shumbha and Chanda, Munda are superior to Mahishasura. At least, they felt fascinated with the Goddess beauty. Andhaka too is superior. Though sweat-born (of course from Shiva's brow when his eyes were closed in dalliance by Parvati), he consorted with Shukracharya, fell in love unwillingly with Parvati, not knowing that he was Shiva's son, he grew up and became a handsome young man, embraked on a relentless battle to win the object of his infatuation. But Mahishasura in the hierarchy of demons is low in the ladder as he is devoid of the love sentiment, conceived as he is in buffalo womb from a power-driven yogic lust. In fact, he is the offspring of rape perpetrated on a large buffalo body wallowing in a sluggish, swampy pond.

Walpurgisnacht of the last tale is different from the earlier two demonologies. Herein, the demons, Sugriva, Chanda, Munda, Raktabija Nishumbha-Shumbha are finely individualised. Though they have all been commented upon earlier, a more focused commentary now is called for. Sugriva has a nice tongue. His *vaikhari* is sweet. He goes to the Goddess as a messenger of Shumbha to persuade her to be the latter's wife or that of his brother Nishumbha or belong to both in polyandry. And when the Goddess does not agree, he starts threatening. Sugriva is so typical of the junior most who goes on a brief for the seniormost. He has no identity of his own. He is a vassal who has no soul. At least in India that is Bharata, Sugrivas abound. And they can be found in high places. In a certain state a chief secretary personally visited a Professor who had incurred the wrath of Chief Minister to eject him out of duly allotted university accommodation. And when the latter hesitated standing his ground somewhat, he had his place raided by the police. Positioned as he was, he could have advised the Chief Minister against the uncalled-for-vendetta. But that is not the Sugriva way.

He has no values, no feeling-register of his own. He just wants to carry out the brief. He has no second thoughts, no tertiary scruples. Sugriva is *vicharahina, bhavahina.*

In Jungian terminology he is a persona guy whose shadow is both personal and in the service of the bad archetype of power. Persona people can be very sweet, but underneath lethal and self-righteous.

The next eruption from the Walpurgisnacht depth of the psyche churned by the Durga process is Chanda who stands for lust. Now lustful energy is an important, significant part of eros. But this lust is for its own sake. It is autonomous. It annuls the other. It seeks its own gratification. Some people have more sexuality than others. Goddess Durga is not against sexuality which she welcomes and espouses. Chanda as lust is demonic, sado-masochistic. There is no refinement. That is why he is seen as an incubus praying on the sexual centre which when freed is the source of joy, sweetness, romance, dalliance.

Another eruption that goes along with Chanda is Munda who is identified as anger, as head anger. As head anger he is replete with specious rationalizations. What is being put down is not anger. Anger is a *vritti.* In some people this *vritti* is more frequent. Even in enlightened ones there is anger. Some mystics are fierce, some gentle. Anger becomes Munda only when it is low, valueless. Munda strikes fear in the hearts of others. Fear in any shape or form results in nervous fatigue. That is why Goddess Durga blasts, from her brow Goddess Kali, her sister to kill Chanda and Munda. Chanda-Munda duo are to be found in great personalities who are either into nuts or neurons. They never find their centering either in deep sexuality, in *bhava,* or true intellectuality.

In dealing with Walpurgisnacht I ignored Dhumralochan, the smoke-eyed as he had been dealt with earlier. Because he dabbles in cliches, calendar phrases, shadow stereotype, he has no understanding of people, places, ideas truly.

Before I go further, I should hasten to impress here that in order to get into one's Walpurgisnacht, one will have to go beyond mild introspection, a mere fluttering of the cerebral cortex. One will have to go also deeply into one's dream and do active imagination on the shadow contents. One can also encounter one's Walpurgisnacht through meditation even as St. Anthony did. If one is neither into dream nor meditation inclined, one can even, and easily too, become aware through Krishnamurti's mystique of choiceless awareness and becoming cognizant of the heavy impediments in the way of truth, peace, harmony, beatitude. Those who are into arts, creativity can do so through writing, painting, sculpture. Others can turn within and see the play of one's interior imagery. So no method can be prescribed.

Raktabija is avarice. If you are greedy about food, drink it is not avarice. Avarice is when you are covetous. You want to grab what is not yours. Avarice belongs to the ego-personality. Not only individuals, but groups, countries are into avarice—some more, some less. Wanting return for your work is not avarice. Avarice is when you want kick-backs. Priests selling indulgences is avarice. Avarice is not *trishna* which is one of the attributes of the goddess. It is not surprising therefore that in order to fight avarice and ego, Goddess has to go into a frenzy and call upon the male gods to assume female fighting forms. The battle is non-stop.

So superficial personahood, smoky stereotype, lust, anger, avarice are parts of Nishumbha and Shumbha. What does it show? Nishumbha is a fine intellectual (eight moons on his battle-shield), Shumbha is an enlightened yogi with void to his credit, but their pre-enlightenment personality complex continues, and there are identified with it. What does it show except that unless one works with one's personality before becoming an intellectual and a yogi and frees it from the hindrances and obstructions, it is better to be a plain Joe, an ordinary Mary Jane. Perhaps, it is worthwhile quoting John C. Pierrakos from his article "An Anatomy of Evil":

> A person who goes into spirituality without having worked out his negativities—his ego-defences and resistances—files high like Icarus, but when he reaches in burning sun, he falls into the sea, the sea of life, and drowns. It is only through transcending and working through the obstacles to life that the human being can rise to the realms of spirituality and creativity.

With Nishumbha and Shumbha Walpurgisnacht is at its darkness. In Walpurgisnacht symbology Shumbha is devil, Nishumbha his Beelzebub. Sugriva, Dhumralochan, Chanda, Munda and Raktabija are their minions. It is very difficult for an intellectual to see his dark underside. He thinks he walks in glitter and glare.

Psychotherapy demonstrates that intellectuals have terrible shadow problems. Archetypal shadow breaks into their ordinary shadow and possesses it. Unless the intellectuals consciously develop a feeling function and learn to be ordinary in functioning and relating as per the advice of Kierkegaarde, as per the advice of Martin Buber, there is no redemption for them. They are like Dante's school-teachers whom he found in *Inferno* much to his consternation. They thrive in their own contrived corridors and cunning passages. With their ideas and abstractions which the fiery one are able to sell, they wreak havoc on societies and wreck polities.

As for the yogis and the enlightened ones their record is not that good either. Nay, it is dismal. They wreck the lives of the devotees and transferencees with their carelessness, irresponsibility, and cruelty. In our times Krishnamurti therefore crusades against authority, power, secular and spiritual, against gurus. And rightly too. Ironically precisely because he denies transferences which he stirred up or which got stirred up, he too has messed the lives of many, and countless others that he never knew personally. So one has to know one's Walpurgisnacht, howsoever enlightened one may be for unless one works oneself into the world as it is, accepts chores, reciprocities, flow, connectivity there is no redemption, no rupture from Walpurgisnacht, no descent of Durga into one's consciousness.

With reference to this Walpurgisnacht it should perhaps be made clear that even though this has been dealt with after the Walpurgisnacht of the first and the second tale of *Durga Saptashati* the fact is that these demons have to be dealt with first to secure the inner theatre. The demons of the Chandi (second tale) are in the outer theatre, while the demons in the first story have to be dealt with, speaking sequentially, at the end. The *mantra* is *Aing hring kling. Aing,* the Mahasaraswati *bija* belongs to the last tale.

CHAPTER 6

Transcreation

CANTO I

MARKANDEYA said
I will tell you Savarni
The son of Sun-god
The eighth Archetypal ruler
How, through the grace of Mahamaya
Goddess Bhagwati
He became the Ruler of Manvantara.

There once lived in the period of Manu
Svarochisha, ruler of the entire world
A king named Suratha of the Chaitra dynasty
The kingdom of Suratha was at its peak
Established in affluence, prosperity, and peace
And love flowered between him and his subjects
As between father and sons
It was paradisial
If indeed there ever was a paradise on earth
If seemed that it would last for ever
This state of felicity and bliss
But suddenly, ominously
Enemies sprang up
Powerful kings
Who first destroyed a neighbouring
King of the Kola dynasty
And then became Suratha's antagonists.

They involved Suratha in war
And even though they were inferior
In forces and weapons
They inflicted a crushing defeat
Suratha stunned
Retreated to his capital and the territory
Surrounding
Suratha valiantly tried to govern
  and consolidate whatever he was left with
But the invaders pressed on
And from within arose his own ministers
  of evil design
Subverting his enemy
Seizing his treasury
Stripped, and dispossessed.

Though still a king in name
Knowing that the ignominious end
Was coming
King Suratha one morning
On the pretext of hunting
Mounted his horse
Disappeared into a forest dense
For days on end
He wandered, weary, hungry
And thirsty
Till he came to a hermitage
Teeming with the beasts of prey
Suratha was afraid.

To his amazement, he found
  them, the ferocious animals
Free from violence
As he came closer to the hermitage proper
He found the place enchanting
With springs, streamlets, lovely lawns

And disciples radiant in countenance
Sat in nooks and corners
In meditation
And some wandered, just for fun
And some doing chores
Such was the hermitage
  of the great sage Medhas
Who received Suratha in hospitality
And bade him live there
If he so wished
Medhas, the twice-born
Asked Suratha no question.

Feeling at home
The king settled with Medhas and his disciples
But felt no peace.

He would brood instead on his lost kingdom
How it had been not only guarded well
But also enriched and enlarged by his ancestors
And rend his hair in guilt and grief
Brood instead
On his wicked ministers
And turn-coat friends
Rage and bitterness clutch his heart
And tear his entrails
He would wonder
How his kingdom was being governed
Laws administered
And finances handled from the treasury.

Aye
He would even wonder
How his chief elephant
Elegant and proud
Always in rut

Fared in captivity
It brought tears to his eyes
And it hurt him
To think of his followers and friends
Beholden to him, not only for their livelihood
But also for their growth, mundane and spiritual
Serving the usurpers
So many shadows came.

Memories, ghosts lurking in places unsuspected
  invading, whelming his consciousness
With contradictory moods.

Till one day
As he wandered
Restless, haunted
He ran into another person
Desolate, alienated like him
Sitting on the edge of a stream
Flowing through the middle of the
  hermitage's extensive domain
"Ho, who are you?" quoth the king
"You seem my double
Sunk in thought
In the grip of sorrow unending."

To this the man replied
You have intuited right
I am a merchant, was,
—I should say—
Once rich and powerful
But, ah, greedy for wealth
My wife and sons joined hands
Made an alliance which had been there
As I suspect now for a long while
They struck when opportunity came their way

Seized my property
Lock, stock, barrel
Kicked me out then
Without a dime.

So here I am in a nickel-less state
Wandering like you
Lost, lonesome
Without news of the welfare
Of my wife and sons
Abandoned by friends
Hoping beyond hope
That they will send for me
Accept me into the family
On whatever terms.

"Strange," said the king
"Your heart craves
  for the wife and the sons
Who cast you out
And that, too, for paltry greed"
"Your are right"
Said the merchant named Samadhi
"But my heart refuses to be angry
Bitter or hard
It is ensnared in feeling
Even now
For the sons
Who renounced the filial bound
For the wife who trampled on conjugal vows
For relatives and friends
Who turned their backs upon me
At the hour of my need.

Ay,
Even though my heart is spiked

Splintered
I long to be with them
I depress
I cannot be angry
Nor can I attain indifference
Detachment."

Markandeya said
O *munis*
Thus grew the friendship between
Suratha and Samadhi
With the secret bond of alienation, loss
They talked, dialogued, encountered
Unearthed their past
Catharted
Experiencing temporary relief which always evaporated
Unable to earth themselves
They approached at last the sage
Medhas
Who discoursed to the duo
In answer to their ego's entrapment
In the world and attachment
Of the Eternal Feminine, Mahamaya
Who involved not just the worldly men
But also the sage, nay, even the gods
Into the whirlpool of delusion.

He said, Medhas:
Both man and animal have knowledge
But it is obscured by attachment
Some see during day
Some during night
Some both through day and night
Some not at all.

With Medha's aphorisms, Koans,
  Esoteric references and abbreviated lauds

To the Eternal Feminine called Mahamaya
Suratha's and Samadhi's curiosity grew
They had never before thought of things, themselves
  Mundane happenings in transpersonal terms
This sure was a different way of looking at things
"Who she be?"
Chorused the pair
"How old? of what appearance?
This Mahamaya, this mysterious mysterium"
"Unborn
Eternal
She
Be."
Replied the sage
"She is beyond our ken
She is the Creatrix of the universe
Pervades the heights and the depths
Small and large
Unique and Existential
One without a second
Beyond time, space, causality
Yet she advents from time to time to realize God's goals
Our minds, our intellects
Our vaunted psycho-spiritual equipment
Is within her domain
So how can we know for real
Who she be
Unless she herself lifts the veil
  I'll tell thee therefore
  A story
  The first of the three
  Dealing with her Mystery."

Once upon a time, when time had suspended itself something which happens once in a while from one universe to another—

(of course, it happens quite often from one stage to another in a person's life, any, even daily from sleep to wake in the morning)—in the interval between a preceding time-cycle called *kalpa* and the present time-cycle that we'er living in, now, which, of course, hadn't emerged.

Lord Vishnu
Logos, Presence
Rested on his celestial couch
  the serpent Shesha
The previous world having dissolved
  or disappeared into Vishnu
He lay there, internally absorbed
On his Shesha still in the Primal Waters
  which stretched endlessly like
The cosmic sea, clam, unruffled
Unknown to Himself
A lotus had arisen from the Lord's navel
Root, stalk, flower
Root hidden below the concave, recessed belly-button.
Stalk and flower
Swaying with multitudinous vibrations
That could only be seen by the mystic gaze
On the lotus sat child-god Brahma
The God of Creation
Being the God of Creation
He is the first among the triune
  gods, Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver,
Rudra, the destroyer
Because he is the first of the three
He is sometimes called the Grandfather
But why the Grandfather chooses to appear
  as a child, born to Vishnu,
Issuing forth from the lotus arising
  from the latter's navel is again a mystery

He contemplated the endless waters
of time stretching beneath him
And the vast vistas of space unfolding in
curve upon curve
And he, the child, but Lord of creativity, the
maker, artificer, the smith, the fashioner of
archetypes, of forms, imprints, blocks
Surveyed East, West, South, North
With his four faces
And even as he surveyed
From within arose the forms of the feminine
Some appealing to his mystic, intuitive faculties
Some frenzying his feelings
Some gripping his thighs
(Activating his instincts)
Some emerging from thought, recollection,
One overwhelmed him with darkness
Darker than any darkness he'd experienced
in his prior manifestation
One dazzling him with white and gold
And as he meditated
Seeking his illumination from each form
Through unitive experience
Suddenly
He was assailed by two demons
Madhu and Kaitabha
Who had sprung meanwhile
Engendered in the dirt deposit which
had accumulated in the two ears of
Vishnu.
Brahma felt confused
Could not understand
How from his father Vishnu
Could be born such demons

One demon had the shape of a honey-bee
His buzzing was sweet to his ears
The other Kaitabha that of a dirty, slimy insect
Madhu captivated one with the sound
While the other closed in like Mantis
In desperation Brahma prayed
For father Vishnu to wake
And rescue him from being devoured
His wails, prayers went unheeded
Then suddenly he saw a luminous light
Shimmering in Vishnu's half-closed eyes
The light came and went
He realized that this light had his father in thrall
He knew this light embodied the power
Forthwith he prayed
And his prayers rose plangent
On webbed wings
To the skies before our skies
O Yoganidra
O Primordial unconscious
Thou alone art our connector to the gods
Thou alone the connector to the manes
Thou alone the carrier of the gods
Thou the Great Gnosis
Thou the Great Delusion
Thou the Great Grasping Power
Thou the Great Infatuation
Thou the Great Goddess
The Great Demoness
Thou nature from whom *gunas* arise
Thou alone the bridge, the pathway
To the sleep, dream, wake realities, states
Thou alone the arrowhead to the *turiya*
Thou art *a priori*

To the big three
Brahma, the creator,
Vishnu, the preserver,
Rudra, the destroyer
From thee arise
The Great knowledge born from Recollection
The Great Delusion
Thou the night of splendour
Thou the night of frustration
How can I know thee
Thou are the benign and beauteous mother
Thou the sovereign ruler
Thou the only emblem of wisdom
Intelligence
Modesty, Growth, Contentment
Peace
Patience
Tranquillity
Forbearance
Beautiful are Thou
Beauty queen of all things
Beautiful in the world
Thine the power
Thine the glory
Thine the numinosity
Thine the darkness
In that which is
And which is not
I am not capable of lauding you
From whom Vishnu and me too
Have advented
Why hast Thou enspelled my father Vishnu
In the sloth of sleep
Who am I to understand thy ways

I do not know how to laud
Thou mysterium tremendum
Please release my father
Enspell these two demons
Madhu and Kaitabha
Arising from my father's
Shadow Masculine Past
And wake him up for them
To be engaged and destroyed
Lauded thus
The recalcitrant Prima Materia
Which had clutched Vishnu in her grasp
Left him
Loosening him from catatonic immobility
Suddenly sprang he
Tall on the body of the mystic snake
Enhaloed by the light streaming
From his numerous hoods
Alert in his eye, ear, lips, torso, thighs
Fighting Madhu and Kaitabha
His own shadows from his previous incarnation
In the prior epoch
For two thousand years.

The war went on
To no avail
Till he prayed to the primordial unconscious
For her grace
For will, even that of the gods of gods
Is stymied
In confrontation with that which is your
Part, you yourself from the hoary past
The Pan Mater
Mahakali
She who has three eyes

Dilated and blazing from each one
  of her faces ten
Who is the colour of crushed collyrium
Iridescent as the dark, blue stone
Who is forever running
Wielding in her hands ten
As assortment of weapons, emblems
(Sword, discus, mace, arrow, bow, lion-club,
  trident, sling, human head, conch)
Gratified with her so Vishnu's coming of age
Who had only experienced her as the Peace
  of withdrawal, passing, surpassing all understanding
Now infatuated the demons
Madhu and Kaitabha
With excessive arrogance
Deluded with vision of their invincibility
They taunted Vishnu
"Ask of us a boon"
Vishnu forthwith replied
"O demons
Since you are pleased
And since, I am not interested
In anything except bringing this five-thousand
  year battle to a fitting close
(So that I can go back to sleep
or to other things, other projects
related to meaning, value, wealth, etc.)
May you be killed."

Seeing that they had been tricked
And realizing that they were honour-bound
  to the boon they had pledged themselves
Unwittingly
For demons have their code of values, too
Contrary to what is usually believed

And seeing that they were surrounded
  by water on all sides
The battle taking place for the last thousand
  years, not on Terra Firma
The snake Shesha, having slipped from
  underneath their feet
Unable to take the heat of their escalating
  encounter
They tried to weasel out of the predicament
Saying
Kill us where no water be
Right away Vishnu enlarged his thighs
Placing their two heads
  on his loins
Severed them with his discus
The Lord with the conch and the mace
The heads flew skyward
Into outer space
While the bodies of the demons
Coagulated in the waters
As two islands joined together
For Brahma to establish his archetypes new
To usher in the new age
  of Eternal Feminine.

CANTO II

In former times, when Indra was the ruler of gods and Mahisha the ruler of the demons, a war raged continuously for hundred years between the gods and the demons. In this war the valiant demons scored a victory over the armies of the gods. Defeating all the gods, the Lord of the demons Mahisha himself assumed the authority of Indra.

Forthwith the defeated gods led by Brahma, the lotus born, went to Vishnu who has the emblem of Garuda in his banner, and to Shiva. There, they narrated in detail to Vishnu and Shiva the iniquities of Mahisha.

They said, "Mahisha has taken over the authority and works of Surya, the sun-god, Indra, sovereign of the gods, Agni, the fire-god, Vayu the wind-god, Chandrama, the moon-god, Yama, the god of death, Varuna the water-god, and that of the other gods also. Driven from heaven, all the gods wander on earth as ordinary mortals. Ay, we have narrated his misdeeds. Ignominious is our lot. We have come to seek refuge with thee. Please think of slaying, Mahisha, this hybrid demon, offspring of power driven Yogi father and his buffalo spouse." Listening to the words of the gods, Vishnu, the slayer of Madhu, and Shiva, both became angry. Anger knitted their eyebrows, twisted and furrowed their countenances. From the angry countenances of Vishnu, the wielder of discus, Shiva and Brahma energy shot forth in the form of extensive effulgences. And also from the bodies of Indra and that of other gods. It became one united mass.

The gods saw this united, flaming effulgence setting fire to the directions which appeared as burning, volcanic mountains. There was nothing, nothing whatsoever, ever produced, comparable to this effulgence which had ever appeared, blasted from the bodies of so many gods. This effulgence, then which had pervaded all the directions, lighted the three worlds, earth, sky, heaven, with its dazzling radiance transformed itself into the archetype of a woman.

Ay, the face of that woman had the light that had shot from the countenance of Shiva (Serene, yet numinous beyond belief).

Her hair had the scintillating dark of Yama
  the death-god
Her arms, crystalline blue, moulded
  from the light of Vishnu
Her breasts radiant from the light of Moon
Her waist golden from the light of Indra

Her calves and thighs pearlescent from the
  light of Varuna
  Her hips made from the dappled light of earth.

From the light of Brahma came
  her dancing, red feet
From the light of Surya, the sun-god
  her golden fingers
From the light of Vasus, gods who permeate space
  the long, tapering fingers of her hands
From the light of Kubera, the god of opulence
  the proud curve of her nostrils
From the light of Prajapati, the ruler of Zeitgeist
  her row of teeth
From the light of fire-god her three eyes
  (the third blazing in the forehead)
From the light of two twilights her eye-brows
From the light of the wind-god two ears
Ay, the light of other gods other than these
  Partook in the making of this Goddess.

Marvellous indeed was the birth of this goddess.

Seeing this Goddess, this numen of numen
  this Numinosum Tremendum
The gods who had suffered at the hands of Mahisha
Rejoiced exceedingly
And desiring victory they gave, each one of them
Their weapons and emblems to her
Shiva offered a trident, materialized from his own trident
Vishnu offered a discus, whirling from his own discus
Varuna, the water-god offered the conch
Agni, the fire-god his lance
Vayu, the wind-god gave her a bow
And a pair of quivers filled with arrows
While Indra, the thousand-eyed sovereign

of the gods in heaven
Producing the thunderbolt from his thunderbolt
And the bell adorning the neck of his
elephant, Airavat
Made them as offerings
Yamaraj, the king of death
Materialized a cudgel out of his cudgel
Varuna the lord of the water his noose
Brahma gave the rosary of white, transparent
quartz
And the sun-god permeated every pore of her body
With the rays of his light

Kala, God of time
Gave her his shining swords and shield
The Milky Ocean, the Maternal Feminine
(One of the seven seas, nay, the base of the seven seas)
Gave a garland of shining pearls
Two ever-new garments
(not subject to perishing, decaying)
A brilliant crest-jewel
A pair of divine ear-pendants
Bangles
An ornament of the shape of half-moon
Bracelets for all arms
Beautiful anklets
An excellent moon-stone necklace
Bejewelled rings on all fingers
Vishwakarma, the divine architect
Gave her a marvellous axe
Weapons of various kinds
And an impenetrable armour
The Ocean gave her an unfading
Lotus garland to wear on the head
another one to wear on the breast

and a lotus of dazzling beauty
to be held in the hand
Himalayas gave her
A lion for riding
And many gems of variegated hues.

Kubera, the Lord Liege of prosperity,
Gave a drinking cup always brimming with wine
Shesha, the king of serpents
He who carries the earth on his hoods
And upholds Dharma, Righteousness
Gave a snake garland
Encrusted with most precious gems.

Honoured with ornaments and
Weapons by the other remaining gods
The Goddess roared with loud laughter
Again and again
Her terrible peals
replete with mockery
Again and again she thundered
The sky resounding with her metallic peals
Unable to contain or hold their volume or frenzy.

In fact, such was the mystic sound *nada*
That the sky seemed to shrivel
Grow small
All the worlds shook with trepidation
Plane upon plane
The Oceans convulsed
The earth quaked
And the mountains shook
With prolonged tremors.

The gods and the sages
Their bodies bent in devotion
Greeted the Goddess, mounted on her lion

With cries of victory.

Hearing this cosmic perturbation
  Shaking the triple world, earth, sky, heaven
The demons put on their armour
Grabbed their weapons
While Mahishasura, the demon king
Exceeding wroth
Surrounded by his hosts
Screaming, "Ho, what is this!"
Mad-dashed towards that roar
Only to see the Goddess
Pervading the three worlds
With her radiance.

He was stunned to see
The earth sinking under the tread of her feet
While her crown etched, pierced a line across
  the firmament
The twang of her quivering bow
  Produced a seismic shock
Shaking the nether-worlds
While she pervaded the entire space
With her thousand arms.

Then began the battle between the gods and the demons, wherein all space radiated from the glow and the shine of the multitudinous weapons, missiles and arrows hurled at one another.

The general of Mahishasura, Chikshura (known for his sharp-as-knife mentality implied in his name) began a terrible battle. Armed with a four-limbed army, comprising chariots, horses, elephants, and infantry divisions, another demon, Chamar by name (known for his mock-meek, mechanical, pseudo-inflated religiosity emblematised in the yak's or the deer's tail made broom he used in his rituals) entered the battlefield too.

The dare-devil Udagar, known for his immodest and offensive ways entered the lists with sixty-thousand chariots. Mahahanu, known for his gutting jaw and conceit descended on the battlefield hurtling there in post-haste with ten million chariots. Asiloma who did not have an iota of feeling because even the hair of his body-pores stood always stiff as sword and Baskal known for his snarling, grunting, boasting, roaring performances in and out of season, gave battle with fifty million and six million chariots respectively. The great demon, Parivarit who had the power in battle to scatter enemies surrounding him from all sides, joined his crew with one million chariots and hundreds of elephants and horses. Bidal, cruel as a Tom-cat engaged in battle with five-hundred thousand chariots; the demon Kal swelling the ranks with the same number.

And numerous other terrible demons equipped with millions of chariots, elephants, horses, came to fight the Goddess. And Mahishasura stood there. Encircled, surrounded by them all, by his demon hosts.

Overweeningly proud, feeling invincible,
The fight began
With the demons attacking the Goddess
With iron maces, javelins, lances, pestles,
  battle-axes, halberds
Some hurled lances
Some flung their nooses
While others tried to kill her
Wielding their swords
With the Goddess Chandika, each time
  destroying their weapons, easily, playfully
She showed no fatigue in her body
  in her face
So pleased at this
The gods and the sages burst once again
  into lauds and chants

Inspired, the Goddess let loose another
shower of her arrows on the demon hosts
Even as her lion, proud to carry her on his back,
Roamed in the midst of the demon armies, spreading
Destruction like a conflagration in the forest.

He was exceeding wroth
Immeasurably
So the battle raged
The exhalations of Chandika
Became her hosts, in hundreds, thousands
And incited by the mother
These valorous hosts began to wreak
havoc on the demon ranks
Using battle axes, javelins, swords,
halberds
Steel against steel
All along in the din and the
Clangour of this war
The war of war fought to restore the
gods, to their proper places
Fought to establish righteousness
Restore order

There were some hosts of Chandika
Who beat the drums
Blew on their conches
And played on their long, cylindrical
drum called *mridanga*
In this festival of war
Goddess speeded her work of destruction.
Some she stunned with the sound of her bell
Some she lassoed in her noose
Dragged them on the ground
Till they gave up their putrescent breaths

Some she cleft in two with sharp sword strokes
Some she pulverized with the blows of her mace
Severely struck by the pestle
Some vomited blood to death
Pierced by her lance
Some fell backwards
Dying, racked with pain
While thousands, millions
Who had earlier oppressed the divine hosts
Breathed their last like porcupines
Their bodies covered with
The rain of her arrows.

Ay, she dismembered them
Some writhed on the ground
Sans arms
Sans thighs
And heads rolled, trunkless
In the midst of an eye here
And an ear there
But in the midst of this carnage,
And dismemberment
The decapitated trunks rose
Clutched their weapons
And fought
Even as they lurched
They still danced to the weird
Music of their diabolical will
Holding swords, lances, scimitars
Hollering, "stop, stop
Here we come."

The battlefield reeked with the dead bodies of elephants, horses, demons, so cluttered was it with the shattered hulks of chariots that there was no spot left for one to put one's foot. Such rivers of blood flowed.

Indeed, the Mother had carried the day. The armies of the demon lay dead. She swept through them like fire devouring a pile of wood, incinerating it to a rubble of ashes. The lion was having his feast, roaring again and again, tossing his mane, roaming at will, sniffing the corpses, searching for the departing life breaths from the convulsing bodies of the expiring demons, showing no mercy. And the gods were pleased with the outcome, pleased with the hosts of the mother who had fought so valiantly. So joyous were they that they showered the Mother and the hosts with an uninterrupted shower of flowers.

CANTO III

Seeing the utter destruction of the demon army
Chikshura, Mahisha's commander-in-chief
Angry and grieved
Let loose a shower of arrows
On the Goddess.

Like a cloud-burst on Sumeru mountain
The Goddess on her turn even as she
Playfully cut loose that massive constellation
Killed his horses, his charioteer
And the lofty flag of inflation that the
Chariot supported

Grabbing his sword and shield
He ran
Lunged at her
Hitting her left arm
And the lion on his head
His sword broke from having made
 that profane touch
Mad, he hurled his lance
Like it was the orb of the sun
Hurtling down from the sky

She smashed it into smithereens
In mid-flight
And tossed her trident
Which cut him into hundred pieces.

Then Chamar advanced
Mounted on his elephant
He hurled his lance
Which retreated backwards in fear
From the mere sound of the Mother
Falling flat on his vehicle's
The elephant's feet,
The enraged lion leapt
And sitting astride the elephant's temples
  battled his foe
Till both fell on the ground
There they smote each other
Giving blows upon blows.

In the split second gap between blows
The lion leapt up with horrendous roar
Falling on Chamar
On his neck
Slicing it from the trunk
With his claws sharper than jagged stones
In this interval, the Goddess dispatched
Udagar with a volley of rocks and trees
Hit Karal with her fists
And as the latter swooned
The lion, now free, pieced
  him with his teeth.

In this while she crusted Udath with her mace
And dispatched Baskal to the nether-world
With the missiles hurled from her catapult,
Andhaka and Tamra

One known for his blindness
Inability to see, perceive
The other for the flamboyance of his aggression
Leapt into the fray
Only to breathe their last.
From the flurry of her smiting arrows
   quick to follow them to Hades
Were Ugarasya, the sensate one
With the fierce mouth, the oral
Compulsive
Ugaravirya, the macho-hero
Mahahanu
The Tom-cat Bidal
Durdara, the schizophrenic
Who refused to be managed Durmukha
Kala
Asiloma.

Ay, seeing the destruction of his
   entire demon army and of his
Commanders and Lieutenants one
   by one, Mahishasura took the field
And went in his buffalo form
In a lone stampede
Through the ranks of the Mother's hosts
Smiting many with his snout.

Trampling hundreds under his hooves
Flailing thousands with his tail
Goring vast multitudes with his horns
So berserk was his blitzkrieg
That the earth sunk
Mountains arose from his exhalations
And fell headlong, smashed into fragments
The Oceans curdled

The clouds split from sheer fear
And shed
Swelling the floods which broke loose
  from the primal disorder
Enthused, the grandiose Mahisha
Charged the Goddess Chandika
But finding her unfurled noose
Closing upon him
He assumed his lion disguise
Thinking that this would phase her
But to no avail
Seeing her sword hovering over his name
He slipped into the role of the warrior
Slip from underneath the sword
Advanced
With a sword in hand
But stymied with a shower of arrows
Became the enraged elephant in rut
Lunging at the lion with his elongated trunk.

Thinking that if he could get the lion
With his trunk
He would have her at a disadvantage
Indeed, it was a brilliant intellectual manoeuvre
He didn't count on what she could do in return
With his trunk chopped from the root below his eyes
He became the buffalo
That he always was
Resumed his cathonic aggression
That he has disguised with his disguises
Of lion as Dharma, man as
Humanity, elephant as superior wisdom
And as he stood, with his horns lowered
For the ultimate thrust
Hooves stamping

Tail flailing
Mouth foaming
Snout snorting
The Mother took a drink from her wine-up
With her eyes redder than ever before
She spoke
Roar, roar, you fool
Your hour come
Ay, with these words she leapt upon his body trampling him
Till his neck stooped
  from sheer strain
But even as she sliced it with
  her trident
  a half man emerged from the
  decapitated trunk
  hollering ambivalent sounds
  of surrender and flight
She could not be prevailed
She hacked off that half man
Rolled this hybrid of torso and neck
  On the ground
Even as the buffalo body sank
  a lifeless hulk.

Seeing this theophanic victory
A few remaining demons witnessing
  this dismembered death of their
  grandiose godlings who could not
  settle for the ego boundaries
  living and letting others live
Fled, screaming lamenting into the dungeons of Hades
The gods and sages burst into laud
Ghandharvas sang
Apsaras danced

CANTO IV

Seeing the death of Mahisha
  and his transformation via
  dismemberment
The gods and the sages burst into a laud
Thou represent the power and the numinosum
Of all the gods: O thou all-pervading and all-enveloping
O Divine Mother
O archetype sublime
We do not know who thou be
There is no knowing
For even Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesha
  do not really know thee
So how can we
Thou art Gauri
The golden one who sits enthroned as
  spouse on Shiva's left thigh
Thou art Lakshmi
Who resides in Vishnu's torso
The Femme inspiratice of Brahma, the creator
And thou art the immaculate Durga
Who overcomes obstacles
Kills demons
Becomes our boat for crossing the unfordable
  Ocean of existence.

Thou art Demeter
  Our lady of plants
Thou art Aphrodite, the Goddess
  of love who made Cytheria her island home
Thou art Athena, the wise one
Thou art Artemis
  The killer of Acteon
  The rider of lions

Please nourish us
Accept us with the intrinsic rhythm
of your love and understanding
Enlighten us into the innermost
arcananum of your wisdom
And with the thrice-great gnosis
May we support the righteous
And kill, even as you did
The wicked to rid the world of fear
And attain the fourth goal of existence, hard to attain
This we discern, intuitively
That thou art the primordial nature
Tremendum Mysterium
Thou art our connector with the gods
Thou art our connector with the ancestors
Thou art our connector with the sages
Who purges the sensual
Purges the shadow and their shortcomings
Sublimating flesh into spirit
Even as they coagulate the spirit into flesh
Through the concretes of love, commitment
Presence prime.

For
Thou art Sophia
Shekinah
Shakti
Anima Mundi
The great Mother
Who was, is and shall be
Thou art the cosmic vibration
In all scriptures
Written and yet to be written
Even as thou art the essence of
Communication in everyday living

In the homes of those who are loving, virtuous,
  performing good deeds
Thou art peace, harmony, prosperity
Even as you blight homes given to
Querulousness and alliances
Those who study and seek truth
Experience thee as intelligence and its
Continuous influx and increase
While the pure ones devoted to higher feelings
Experience thee as Reverence
In the homes of the psychically elevated
Thou art experienced as modesty
While in the world out there the heroes
Experience thee as fierceness
But with compassion in the heart
How come, Mother
Mahisha didn't understand
In his hybris he dared take arms
Against not only the gods
But against you yourself.

May be
He craved for that fight
Knowing that only through holocaust,
  death of his friends, dismemberment
  of his entire being
He could attain Heaven
A relationship with you
Ay
You could have killed him with a
  glance, a breath
But in your compassion deigned
And sanctified him with the touch
  of your weapons
O Bhadrakālī

Destroy the Shadow Masculine in us
Even as you did with Mahishasura
  and his cohorts, Chikshura, Chamar, Bidal, etc.
Destroy the Shadow Masculine in the world
  in society, in the external collective
Protect us from all sides
From above and below
With the *mandala* of your weapons
Root out all fear
With the clangour of your bell
With the twang of your bow
With the hiss of your trident
With the bizz of your whirling discus
And grant us
Righteousness
Grant us our nature
The fulfilment of our true desires
Grant us meaning
Grant us the wealth of individuation
Grant us ultimately *nirvana* in *sansara*
For thou
Can grant everything.

CANTO V

The sage said:

Once again it so happened in days of yore that two demons, Shumbha and Nishumbha snatched the rulership of the three worlds from Indra, the sovereign ruler of the gods. They also snatched from him all his rights to the rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices.

Shumbha and Nishumbha also snatched the authority of the God Moon, Sun-god, Kubera, the God of Riches, Varuna, the God of the Sea into their own hands. They themselves began to do the work of the God of Fire and the God of the

Winds. They assumed to themselves the powers of the gods.

Fallen from their places, deprived of even the semblance of their powers, defeated and humiliated, dispossessed, without any place to go, beggared refugees the gods began to think of the invincible Goddess Chandika and came to the Himavan, the lord of the mountains, the Himalayas. For the Goddess had given them the boon that she would come to their help whenever the need arose. Since terrible, terrible calamity had befallen them, where else could they go and seek refuge but to the Goddess. Thinking thus, they had come to the lofty Himalayas, Standing on the banks of Ganges, with bowed bodies and bent necks.

They lauded:

Praise be the Goddess
The mother of existence
The mother of untold light years
and intergalactic spaces
Praise be the Goddess
The eternal one
One without a second
Who is the mystic moonlight
Giver of nourishment, joy
And shelter supreme

Praise be the Goddess
Who dwells as intelligence in all beings
Who dwells in all things in the form of
Hunger, hankering, desire
In the form of force, power, élan vital;
In the form of patience and forbearance
Praise, praise, praise be the Goddess
Ay, she is both individuality and generality
Giver of uniqueness and universality
Giver of reverence, glory, peace, modesty

Praise be the Goddess
Who moves in all things as vibration
As mental states
As instinct, memory, consciousness
Who is the embodiment of bliss, compassion,
Contentment, shadow and illusion.

In former times
When we were down and out
Having lost everything to the demon Mahisha
She had enthused us with her deed,
And unparalleled courage
And having recovered our pristine state
We had lauded her
And here we once again
Reaching out
From the depth of our shameful predicament
Praise, praise, praise be the Goddess.

The sage said:

While the gods were engaged in the laud, Parvati, the daughter of Himavan came to bathe in the water of the Ganges. And she of the pretty eyebrows stopped and asked, "Who are you praising O gods?" And even as she had said that, an emanation emerged from the physical sheath of the mother.

The Emanation who came to be known as the Golden Koushiki forthwith replied:

They are praising me, O sister mine

These gods, suffering from the unbearable oppression of the two demons, Shumbha and Nishumbha.

Parvati who had turned blue-black having given her golden body to the Emanation said, "So be it." And returned to her abode where dwelled her husband, Shiva. Because of this change of her from moon-stone gold to blue-black, Parvati came to be called Kalika.

While this was going on, this mystic scene between Kalika and Koushiki.

Two of the followers, ferrets of Shumbha and Nishumbha
Passing by.

Happened to see Koushiki talking to the gods
And they were struck to the core with her dazzling beauty
Running
Breathless with excitement
They came to Shumbha
Where the latter sat in court
Along with his brother Nishumbha
In carousal with their cronies
They chorused in Unison
Chanda and Munda
O great King
Who has defeated all the gods
  and has them on the run
Who has appropriated all their riches
Be it the swan-driven chariot of Brahma
The parasol made of silver filaments of Varuna
Be it the eight-headed horse of Indra
Who is fleeter than the wind
  and can pervade the eight directions
Who had appropriated not only the wealth of the unconscious
But also the dynamis of the archetypes.

O great King
You have every thing
All the precious gems, jewels
The three worlds could offer
But our eyes beheld today
As we went, sauntering along
  the banks of Ganges
The gem of gems

And think we
That gem, that crest-jewel
Should adorn your bed
Or that of your brother.
The Chanda and Munda described the
Charms of Koushiki
How she set the water on fire
And bathed the mountains on either side of the Ganges
With spangling radiance
Forthwith Shumbha was seduced
He sent for his ambassador, Messenger
Sugriva known for his comely appearance, manners
  grace, and honeyed tongue
"O Sugriva," quoth he
"Go to the spot indicated by Chanda and Munda
Tell this precious jewel of lady
Who I am
Conduct yourself in such a manner
That she comes willingly in love to marry me
Or my brother Nishumbha here."

And Sugriva came on wings of steeds
To the lonely spot where the Goddess was seated
Before disclosing his mission
He introduced himself
His masters
Praised their attainments
How they are rulers of the three worlds
Earth, Sky, Heaven
How all beings, obey their commands
Carry our their slightest wishes
He went on and on
Chanting, cataloguing their potencies
  powers, attainments, and realizations
Then came to the point with the following words:

"Lucky, indeed, you are
That you are desired by them
Marry one of them
You will have riches, sovereignty
Power and Pleasures undreamed."
The Goddess replied
"What you say about your masters,
  is indeed true
I know who they be,
And much more, besides
I'm pleased with the marriage offer
You have brought
The only problem is
She added ironically with a change of tone
When I was young of light-green years
I took a vow
Perhaps foolish in hindsight
That I'll only wed he who is stronger than I
And wins me in battle."
"O beauteous Lady,"
Sugriva spoke
"You don't know what you're talking about
Shumbha and Nishumbha
Two mighty kings
Performers of Valorous deeds
Are Invincible
They have already defeated all the gods
Even Yama, the god of death
From who they took the mace of Death
They decide who will live and who will die
And no Yama
How can you fight them
You are only a woman."
"Go back," said the Mother

"And tell your masters
What I've told you
Just as you told me their wishes
You are only a messenger
A pigeon, shall I say."
Sugriva lost his cool at the sarcasm
His persona faltered
The shadow took over and spoke
"I advise you, O lovely lady
To go willingly to Shumbha and Nishumbha

What's the use of playing the game of vows
My advice is that you go to them
Why be dragged by the hair
Lose face, pride, dignity
They are powerful
Even Indra cannot stand in battle against them."

The Goddess replied
"Let me give you advice too
Why do you identify with them so heavily
Are you yourself nothing
You have a nice persona
Pleasant face, and eloquent tongue
Stay here in the mountains
Find out your name
Free yourself from the twin incubi
I know they are strong and valorous
Yoked together in a weird *coniunctio*
Like faggots...."
"Anyway," the Goddess concluded with a shift in mood
"You go and tell them
No deal
With them
And with the polymorphous perverse crew
That carouses, consorts with the shades of the Night."

CANTO VI

The sage said:
When Sugriva brought the news
To Shumbha that the lady of his dreams
Won't come without a battle
The demon king went into a fit
He summoned an old trusted lieutenant
Dhumralochan
Advanced in years
Who saw things as he was told
Being decrepit in the head
"Ho, Dhumralochan
Go where this lady is
With your divisions
Grab that wicked one by the hair
And drag her here
And if any one dares come in the way
Be it god, *yaksha* or *gandharva*
Despatch them to Hades."
And Dhumralochan rode forthwith
With sixty-thousand troops
Came to the interior of Himachal
Espying the Goddess seated on a snowy peak
Hollered
O wicked wight
Get ready at this very instant
To go to my master
If not
I'll drag you, screaming, kicking
And throw you, prostrate, convulsing at his feet."

The Goddess replied:
"O Dhumralochan
You are an old man
Who never grew up through experience

You do not see
You were born cross-eyed
With a congenital defect in your sight
No wonder
All this is implied in your name
I don't consider you
A worthy antagonist
Go home
With your troops
And tell your master
To send somebody worthwhile
For me to encounter."
These words of the Goddess
Burnt the ears of Dhumralochan
The eyes of the Pseudo-Psychopomp
Who saw things through the veil
Of generalization, reduction, distortion
Went blind on him
He rushed towards her
Only to be reduced to ashes
Instantly by her grunt
By her *hunkara*
Seeing their old general
The veteran of countless campaigns
Reduced to a rubble
The sixty-thousand troops went wild
Hurling pell-mell their arms, lances, hatchets

The lion of the Goddess
Enraged
Made roar upon roar
Curdling the blood of the demons
Some he smote with his paw
Some he tore with his mouth
Some he stampeded to a bloodied

Quivering mass of flesh, bone and tendon
With his hind legs
Gashing open the bellies
With his claws
Severing countless heads
With the strikings of the paws
His mouth red from the drinking of blood
He laid waste the entire demon army.

Hearing that Dhumralochan
Was finished with his entire army
Of sixty-thousand braves
Shumbha was stunned with the magnitude
Of his defeat
He summoned his two tough generals
Chanda and Munda
Both winners of blitzkrieg campaigns
Against the gods in the past
Chanda was fierce in the lions
Munda was fierce in the head
And the two together made a crack team
Super alliance of aggression.

And Shumbha said
It's time for you two
To mount a campaign
Take as many troops as you need
Kill this lion of hers
That I've heard so much now
Stun her
Bind her
And bring her, hair bedraggled
Bound, captured
This is the least you two owe me
Having drawn my attention to her
With your praise, fascination

Till I was seduced with the sound
of you words
Not knowing what was what.

CANTO VII

The *rishi* said: then at his command the *asuras,* fully armed, with Chanda and Munda at their head, marched in fourfold array.

They saw the Devi, smiling gently, seated upon the lion on a huge golden peak of the great mountain.

On seeing her, some of them excited themselves and made an effort to capture her, and others approached her with their bows bent and swords drawn.

Thereupon Ambika became terribly angry with these foes, and in her anger her countenance then became as ink.

Out from the surface of her forehead, fierce with frown, issued suddenly Kali of terrible countenance armed with a sword and noose.

Bearing the strange skull-topped staff, decorated with a garland of skulls clad in a tiger's skin, very appalling owing to her emaciated flesh, with gaping mouth, fearful with her tongue lolling out, having deep-sunk reddish eyes and filling the regions of the sky with her roars, and falling upon impetuously and slaughtering the great asuras in that army, she devoured those hosts of the foes of the *devas.*

Snatching the elephants with one hand she flung them into her mouth together with their rear men and drivers and their warrior riders and bells.

Taking likewise into her mouth the cavalry with the horses, and chariot with its drivers, she ground them most fearfully with her teeth.

She seized one by the hair and another by the neck; one she crushed by the weight of her foot, and another of her body.

And she caught with her mouth the weapons and the great arms shot by those *asuras* and crunched them up with her teeth in her fury.

She destroyed all that host of mighty and evil natured *asuras*, devoured some and battered others.

Some were killed with her sword, some were beaten with her skull-topped staff, and other *asuras* met their death being ground with the edge of her teeth.

On seeing all the hosts of *asuras* laid low in a moment, Chanda rushed against that Kali, who was exceedingly terrible.

The great *asura* (Chanda) with very terrible showers of arrows, and Munda with discusses hurled in thousands covered that terrible-eyed (Devi).

Those numerous discusses, disappearing into her mouth, looked like numberous solar orbs disappearing into the midst of a cloud.

There at Kali, who was roaring frightfully, whose fearful teeth were gleaming within her dreadful mouth laughed terribly with exceeding fury.

Then the Devi, mounted upon her great lion, rushed at Chanda and seizing him, by his hair, severed his head with her sword.

Seeing Chanda laid low, Munda also rushed at her. She felled him also to the ground, striking him with her sword.

Seeing the most valiant Chanda and Munda laid low, the remaining army there became panicky and fled in all directions.

And Kali, holding the heads of Chanda and Munda in her hands, approached Chandika and said, her words mingled with very loud roars.

Here have I brought you the heads of Chanda and Munda in as two great animal offerings in this sacrifice of battle; Shumbha and Nishumbha, you shall yourself slay.

The *rishi* said: Thereupon seeing those *asuras,* Chanda and Munda, brought to her, the auspicious Chandika said to Kali these playful words: "Because you have brought me both Chanda and Munda, you, O Devi, shall be famed in the world by the name Chamunda."

CANTO VIII

Hearing of the death of Chanda and Munda
  and their combined hosts
Shumbha for the first felt fear for his kingdom
He felt that a strange force had entered his body
An alien force over which he had no control
Sometimes, it ascended from his sacral region to the head
Descending at other times from the head to the knees
At times
The current was so strong as to incapacitate him
Inside, from the depths, an intuition shaped itself
That this new force
Stronger than his ego, his mind, his titanic will
Had come from this lady that he was fighting.

Panicked with this power
Negating, whelming his own power
He ordered a total mobilization of all his forces
And the troops came from all quarters of his kingdom
And leading them against the mother
He hurled them in the greatest offensive of all time
The like of which had never been seen on earth, sky, heaven
Compared to this assault
His battles against the gods were puny skirmishes.

Seeing that ferocious army
Filling the triple world
Demons massed on earth
Demons flying around in thick formations in the sky
Demons constellated, tier upon tier in heaven
The mother, Chandika
Filled the space between Earth and Heaven
With twangs of her bow string
The lion ejaculated roar upon roar
With the Mother amplifying them

With the uninterrupted tolling of her bell;
Kali opened her gaping mouth
And drowned the twanging, roaring, tolling
With shattering sounds of her own
Which reverberated from side to side
In ten directions
The gods, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Guha, son of Shiva,
  the warrior god, Indra
Went into a kinetic whirl
Blasting from their bodies warrior-goddesses
From the body of Brahma emerged
Goddess Brahmani
Seated on an aerial chariot
Yoked to swans
In her two hands she carried
A rosary of beads and a water-pot.

From the body of Maheshvara, the Great God
Emerged Goddess Maheshvari
Riding a puissant, white bull
She wore huge snakes as bangles
Wielded a trident
And a slight sliver of a silver moon
Glowed from her flowing, profuse locks.

From the body of young warrior god, Guha or Kumar
Emerged goddess Kumari
A young, ethereal girl
Riding a pretty peacock
Yet she carried a lance in the hand
  from which sparks of light emanated
  in a continuous shower
From the body of Vishnu emerged
Goddess Vaishnavi of four arms
She was seated in a many-hued, opalescent bird, Garuda
She wielded discus, mace, sword and bow

Even as she blew enchanting, soul-enrapturing
Music from a conch from a mystic sea
From god Varaha, the boar-god
Who in former times had dived deep into the sea.

To save the Goddess Earth from the clutches
of demon who had her in thrall
Emerged Goddess Varahi
And from God Narasingha, half-man, half-lion
Emerged the proud, part spiritual, part cathonic
Goddess Varahi
She roamed freely in the battlefield
Her mane shook.

The vibrations issuing from the tossing mane
Scattered the constellations of stars
Hither and thither
Like they were particles of dust
Even as those issuing from her feet
Shook the nether-worlds with seismic shocks
From the ruler of the heavens
Emerged Goddess Aindri
She had a thousand eyes
Espying every point in the battlefield
From her perch on the elephant
That she rode,
Wielding the thunderbolt.

Seeing Chandika, Kali, Lion, and the goddesses,
All God Shiva said to his wife, Chandika
"Let the demons be annihilated
Root, branch, and all
Without delay
Out of love for the gods for me."
Chandika heard and shook in wave upon wave
of kinetic ecstasy

a terrible force of dissolution emerged
Which roared like a hundred jackals
Yelling together
Ye she said to her husband, Shiva
"Lord, I will most certainly do
What thou bid me.

I should, however, like to give
Shumbha one chance
You please go to the two brothers,
Shumbha and Nishumbha
Tell them
We are tired of their arrogance
Tell them to control their egos
Give up their inflation
Restore the sovereignty of the triple world
to God Indra
And the other gods to their share in oblations in the
administration of the world
Tell them go to the nether regions
Where they belong
Together with their troops
Tell them
If they fail to listen now
While there is time
I will unleash my jackals
And have their armies torn, gnawed
lacerated, dismembered
Tell them
That the mothers will drink their blood
Unless good sense prevails."
God Shiva went
To where Shumbha and Nishumbha were
Apprised them of the contents of Chandika's
Message

But they turned a deaf ear
And the battle began instantly
Between the divine and demoniac's troops.

In the first round
Chandika, Kali, Lion, and the goddesses eight
Along with Shivadhuti the goddess last to
  emerge from the body of the God Shiva
Rained such devastation on the
  demon hosts
  They took to their heels.

But a demon of the name Raktabija
Hollered at the fleeing troops
The following words
"Look at me, O cowards
I am Raktabija
My ego is invincible
Every drop of blood that I shed in battle
Becomes a warrior just like me
Follow me
And see how I engage these women
Who think they are so alluring and devastating."

Ay
With these words
He sprang into battle
Goddess Aindri struck him with her thunderbolt
Drew blood
But from the blood-drops demons grew faster
  than eyes could see
Vaishnavi struck with the discus
Kaumari with her lance
Maheshwari with her trident
Ay, they all struck him in unison
Only to find
(horror of horrors)

The battlefield covered with thousands upon
thousands of the offspring
Ferocious and shadowy like he
The gods felt discouraged
The goddesses felt taunted, thwarted
But
Chandika laughed
And her jackals yelled and screamed
And she said
"O Gods and Goddesses
Do not despond
He, this Raktabija is just a bug
He has no bone, sinews, thews
He is just all blood
See, see what I'm about to do!
Then whirling to Kali Chamunda
She said, "Open your mouth, wide, wide
As I move
As we all move individually, in alliances
Hitting them with all the weapons we got
Let Chamunda Kali roam
Throughout the length and breadth of the battlefield
Drinking, lapping up the spurting, gushing
Blood in midair before it reaches ground
Coagulating into demons."
They did as directed.

Slaughtering, massacring
With Kali, here, there, everywhere
Like a dynamic, kinetic vision
Her mouth, agape, distended
Tongue, long and lolling
Drinking, drinking, drinking
This went on
And the battlefield cleared

Till there was nobody left
Except Raktabija
Nishumbha and Shumbha
Then she struck Raktabija
The egomaniac with the power
  to proliferate, multiply
She struck him on the head
With her lance
His head burst open like a coconut
Blood gushed, spurted in a hundred rivulets
Kali Chamunda leapt
And astride on his shoulders like a fiend
Put her mouth to them
Sucking, slurping
Till he was all denuded
And fell as a dehydrated husk
On the lap of the earth
Great was the rejoicing of the gods
As the mothers danced the victory dance
  wild, jubilant
Now holding hands, now letting go
Changing their places
They danced a *mandala* of kaleidoscopic energies and
  vibrations
With Chandika in the centre.

Chamunda Kali, Lion and Shivadhuti
Constituting the inner ring
The ring moving, mediating the dynamis
  of the centre to the goddesses eight
Brahmani of the rosary and the water-pot
Vaishanavi of the conch, mace, bow, sword
Maheshwari of the bull, huge mace, trident and the
  silver moon in her looks
Kumari of the peacock and lance

Varahi with the boar face and the body of a woman
Narasinghi, the lion-hearted
Aindri of the elephant and thousand eyes
Her thunderbolt now sheathed
And Chamundi with the hair flying
skyward and upturned eyes
Riding the corpse of Raktabija
Nishumbha, Shumbha
Stood there, dazed in mind
Their bodies writhing though
In convulsions involuntary
The dance went on and on
Then abruptly stopped
And Chandika spoke
"O Nishumbha and Shumbha
You may as well give up
As you can see
(with your persona, complexes of lust and anger
and your vaunted ego)
With your Sugriva, Dhumralochan, Chanda, Munda, and
Raktabija
Who are at present in Hades
Along with their demon hordes
Purging, putrefacting
(in time, of course, they will be resurrected)
You two
One of you is proud of his intellect
Power to probe into the deeps of the unconscious
And you Shumbha all puffed up
with spiritual experiences
Having entered the void a few times
have not been able to prevail against me
Go home
Take a week to reflect
And give in willingly

If not
We meet again
For the fight to the finish
And I'll meet you two alone."

CANTO IX

The week came and went
Nishumbha and Shumbha
Appeared in the battlefield
Not humble and contrite
Instead with anger augmented
Nishumbha was the first to hit the mother
  with his projections
They streamed forth from his eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth
From each and every part of his body
They streamed forth from his mind, ego, intellect
They shone like eight moons on his shield
The mother met them head-on
Negating, deflating
She wore him down
Till he swooned
Shumbha then took the field
Huffed, puffed
Spat snarled
Fierce, solar
He too was flattened on the ground
But while Shumbha lay prostrate on his back
Nishumbha arose, refreshed, recovered
Started all over again
Fed up
Chandika smote him in the heart with a spear
A shadow emerged from the heart as a man
Hollering
"Don't do this to me

What will I do
Without my intellect, my vast lunar creativity."
The mother laughed merrily
Put the sword to the neck
Of this effeminate emergence
Nishumbha writhed for a while
Then was still.

CANTO X

Just then Shumbha arose
"O Lady
You have killed my brother
He was everything to me
My heart, my soul
He was the body of my body
I curse the day when Chanda and Munda came and seduced
me with your beauty
And involved me in this war foisted on me
I will kill you for this."
"I know"
Replied the mother
"He was everything to you
You two were joined incestuously
Now you are sundered
Even now you can surrender
And enter the world without power tripping
With heart changed
Willing to serve the gods
Your titanic will, obedient
In the service of archetypes
Not the other way around as you did."
"Never", bellowed Shumbha
Grabbed the mother
And flew into the skies

And there
Poised in mid-air
They fought
The demon hit the goddess on the heart
With his fist hard as diamond
Scintillating as a solar orb
The mother slapped him several times in the heart
With each slap opening a ventricle,
  a chamber closed for centuries
Then she wheeled in dazzling motion
Freeing herself from his vice-like grip
She swung him around
And flung him down on earth
Alighted down like a nymph
Piercing his heart with a spear
Whose point she twirled like the point of a spinning top
Shumbha breathed his last
To the heaving of oceans, islands, mountains.
Then it was still
All motion stopped
The sky became spotless
The world returned to its original state
Yet it was mutated to a different rhythm
The gods rejoiced
Gandharvas sang
Apsaras danced
The winds blew, smelling of sandalwood
The sun grew soft without losing its resplendence.

CANTO XI

The sage said:
Upon the death of the Fierce shadow
Masculine, Shumbha
The gods with Indra

Headed by Agni, the fire-god
Lauded Katyayani, the goddess
of *coniunctio*, of mystic love
The Goddess who is prayed to by lovers
For happy nuptials
Their faces shone with moon-like luster
On account of the fulfilment of their desires.

They chorused in unison
"Grateful, indeed, we are
O Sovereign Mother
For removing our distress time and again
For fulfilling our desires
In the form of vast earth
You support us all
In the form of water
Thou quenchest our thirst
In the form of fire Thou purge us and inspire
In the form of air
Thou pervadest and goeth where thou willest
In the form of sound
Thou permeatest all worlds
In the form of intelligence
Thou givest enjoyment and liberation
In the form of Maya
You delude and charm
As you did with Madhu and Kaitabha
Chanda and Munda, Nishumbha and Shumbha
Thou art time
Through which we evolve,
Ripen, decay, and fall
The universes come and go
Cease altogether
Yet you stay as the Cosmic Residuum
To create anew

Praise be the Goddess
Thou art the Muse
Thou the preserver, the charmer, the enchantress
Thou the punisher, destroyer
Thou the rescuer, the protector
The redeemer
Countless be thy forms
Hallelujah
O thou intellect
United with God
All-flowing knowledge
Thou the Night of Splendour
The Night of Delusion
Hallelujah
Protect us with your ever-sharp
Flaming trident
Protect us with your sword
Smeared in the blood and fat of demons

When pleased
Thou destroyest all diseases
When enraged
Thou destroyest everything longed for
Thou run the world fallen
In the vortex of infatuation, girt
With the ignorance of darkness
Verily
Them who take refuge in thee
Become the refuge for others
Thine is the glory and power
O dynamism par excellence
Thine the magnetism without
any covering that is false
Thine the total rest of gravitation
not dependent on anything else

And thou the power ineffable
Beyond the triad
Thou the state, *turiya,* the fourth ledge
of attainment
That scriptures talk of
And the alchemists aspire
Yet thou throwest the universe
In the whirl of Maya
And gods and men in the Abyss
of my-ness
Hallelujah
Help us, mother
Save us not only from demons
As you have done time and again
But help us walk in the difficult
paths of knowledge
Show us the way in the labyrinth of
confusion and nigredo
With the lamps of discrimination
Hallelujah.

The sage said:
Pleased with the gods' laud
The Mother gave them this boon
For the benefit of the world.

Said she
"I will advent time and again
As Artemis to destroy the Shadow Masculine
As Shakambhari, the lady of plants, to feed the world
As Shatakshi
With the thousand quivering eyes
To irrigate famine-struck lands
And to grace the sages with my glances
I will advent

Taking any form, plant, animal, beast
A cluster of innumerable bees
Know ye, O Gods,
The innermost secret of my essence
Just as all ways of knowledge
Are my different parts
To be perused, grasped, differentiated, used
Likewise, exactly in the same way
All women are my auspicious aspects
The witch, the wench, the harlot
Not to be shunned
I am the honey of knowledge
In the positive and negative of countless forms
They are spokes, radii, emanations from
  the dynamis of my centre
I am the Great Round.

CANTO XII

The Goddess went on:
Addressing now the world
"Whosoever reads this scripture,
Grasps my deeds pertaining
To the killing of demons
Masters my forms
Intuits the essence in my lauds
Concentrates with an open, receptive mind
On my glories and stories
Then espouses, embraces
With the dynamis of will
Has nothing to fear
Neither from foes, robbers,
Even Kings.

Nay even the families of my devotees
Their friends
Whosoever comes in their contact
Within the radius of their thought and feeling
Within the ambit of their intention of concern
Will rejoice
Will have their enemies destroyed
Suffering alleviated
Bad dreams disappear
Friendships restored.

Lost in a forest
Straggling on a lone path
Encircled by robbers
Or seized by hoods in a desolate place
Pursued by lion, tiger, wild elephant
Or aggressed by an irate king
Condemned and humiliated
Or caught in some frail bark tossed by high
Winds on high seas
Whatever be the plight, predicament,
  the disadvantage in encounter
Or depth of helplessness
Think of me
Surrender
Experience my standing presence
To be free from the dire strait
To be rid of the demons
"And this is both concrete
And symbolic."

Said the sage
"For this cosmos is her egg-of-immensity
That she pervades broods on
Dissolves, creates.

CANTO XIII

The sage said:
"These stories of the Goddess
I have told three
O King Suratha
O Merchant Samadhi
Take refuge in Her."
Hearing his words, Markandeya said,
Suratha, despondent at the loss of his kingdom
And deflated with ego-loss
Bowed down to sage Medhas, his guru
Repaired forthwith to the sandy banks of a river
Samadhi followed suit.

There they performed worship
Making an image of the Goddess
Sometimes, offering her flowers,
Incense, water-sprinklings
Sometimes, dialoguing with themselves
Sharing their experiences
This went on for three years
Then the Goddess appeared
Ready to give whatever they desired
The king chose to capture his kingdom back
And govern it well.

The merchant chose *nirvana*
He had had his fill with the world
The Goddess obliged
"O King in a few days
Not only will you kill your enemies
Recover your kingdom
Not only will it not slip from your hand
But after death you will merge

In the sun
And become the archetype of the Ruler
For the kings on earth
And you Samadhi
Will experience knowledge, Detachment,
Nirvana
Rescue people lost in the coils of
Sansara
Help them reduce their ego size
Help them in the arduous path
Of gnosis."
With these words
The goddess disappeared.

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